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Samuel R. Delany Science and Literature

Traditionally—at least since the academization of the latter shortly after World War I caused such changes in the rhetoric of the former—the relation between them has been generally antipathetic.

In 1662, the poet John Dryden was elected as a Fellow to the Royal Society. (In its Ur-period it was called the "Invisible College"—in Robert Boyle's letters of 1646 and 1647.) After its official convention in 1660 it was (to give it its full title) "The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge." But other literary lights had been elected to the Society, including Samuel Pepys. These fellowships bespeak an intermingling of the intellectual endeavors that, today, we characterize as the humanities and the sciences hard or impossible to conceive of now, if only because even the notion of such an intermingling as we speak of it—now—presupposes a clear and delineated separating out of the two fields which would then allow their separate forms to merge, a separation which, precisely, had—in the 17th century—not yet occurred; or rather, was only in the process of occurring.

That separation, however, marks a gentle and evolutionary violence that is the Ur-version of the antipathy I cite—as the "Invisible College" was the Ur-version of the Royal Society itself.

It is useful here to review the denotative shifts in the word literature itself—a word that in the time of Dr. Johnson meant an acquaintance with what had been written, that is: a field of knowledge grounded on a range of experience. By the beginning of the 19th century, while the connotations—that which pertains to writing—remained intact, the denotative, semantic core of the word "literature" had shifted to denote the profession of writing, that is: a practice of employment.

Dr. Johnson wrote: "Mrs. Thrale has wide literature."

Charlotte Brontë wrote: "I would like to be *in* literature."

And it is only by the century's end, after the explosion of printing represented by the 1880s—a decade that saw, at its beginning, the Remington rifle company employing its extensive ballistic technology to remodel itself into the Remington Typewriter Company, and Morgenthau's 1882 patent of the linotype, a decade that saw, by its end, practically five times as much printed material, from newspapers to novels, as had been printed ten years before—that, under such social violence, we get the next denotative shift in the meaning of "literature" to what may someday be remembered as its modernist meaning: a set of texts of a certain order of value, that is: the highly problematic intersection of a set of objects with a certain complex and malleable metaphysic.

Ezra Pound might have written: "This library has a large selection of literature."

But both Brontë and Johnson would have found the statement at best awkward and arguably incomprehensible.

It's my contention that, after a hundred years, while its connotations have remained more or less in place, the denotative and semantic focus of the word "literature" is shifting once again. If we want to call its new semantic location a postmodernist—or postmodernist—meaning, I leave that to you. But if we would look for the social and material causes of that shift, we could do no better than to turn to the material and conceptual pressures of science.

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a reading list, and a flurry of bats.

Greg Cox Excerpts from *The Transylvanian Library:* *A Consumer's Guide to Vampire Fiction*

"Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms."
—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Introduction

Greetings! Welcome to the Transylvanian Library, the only biblioteca that opens only at night.

Do you like vampires? If not, you're in the wrong place. This entire Library has been given over to open graves, swooping bats, mysterious throat wounds, and unholly thirsts. We're talking about *nosferatu* here, the bloodsuckers, the Undead. Oh, there may be a werewolf or two lurking about in the pages that follow, but not unless they have been accompanied here by someone with a black cape or long canines. This Library is for vampires only—and for the mortal authors who have created them. Laura Ingalls Wilder is nowhere around.

It should be easy for you to find your way about. Not far from here is a chronological listing of over two hundred writers, all of whom have penned novels or short stories with vampiric content. Under each author's name, you'll find a discussion of his/her work, including: plot details, a critical evaluation, the original publisher, an approximate page count (based on the nearest edition at hand), notes on movie and TV adaptations, plus some attempt to place each tale within the ongoing history and evolution of the fictional vampire.

I don't claim to have *every* vampire story—that would probably require a pact with the devil—but every attempt has been made to make this Library as complete as possible.

Most of all, it is hoped that every entry will provide a "feel" for what each story is like. You may then choose which you may—or may not—wish to read. Not all the books described here are still in print, but every one can still be found in libraries, used books stores, etc. Author and Title Indices have also been provided.

(Continued on page 3)

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Before you go browsing through our metaphorical shelves, however, perhaps you'd care to stay still for a brief lecture from your humble Librarian. There are general matters to be discussed, prior to moving on to the particulars of a hundred nightmares.

To be specific:

1. *What is a vampire?* Chances are, when you hear the word "vampire," a definite mental image comes to mind, one derived from novels, movies, comic books, or some strange combination thereof. Possibly that image resembles Bela Lugosi or Christopher Lee or even Frank Langella. One should remember, though, that the standard-model vampire is only an approximation of dozens of varying fictional creations. As you shall quickly discover, not all vampires are alike. Though born of a common heritage of myths and literary traditions, every new author tends to emphasize (or ignore) different components of the legend. Some vampires can change into bats or wolves; some cannot. Some fear daylight, or mirrors, or garlic; some do not. Most are immortal, but not all.

Basically, a vampire is someone who lives on blood—and sometimes even that doesn't apply. (For example, see FREEMAN, MARY WILKENS.)

2. *Types of vampires.* Among this multiplicity of singularly individual, a few recognizable patterns repeat themselves, enough so that we can define some basic categories. Vampiric archetypes, if you will.

The first is the Creature of Hell. Soulless, demonic, malevolent, utterly lacking in any human qualities beyond appearance; this is the oldest form of vampire, the creature of superstition, feared by our ancient ancestors. This is Dracula, and Lucy Westenra after her transformation. The Creature of Hell may have been a living soul once, but no trace of human virtues survives in it—or in those it transforms. This is also, by the way, the vampire that scared me silly as a child: the only monster that could steal your very self from you.

The second type, the Reluctant Vampire, has literary origins, being born from authors' desire for greater depth of character. The Reluctant Vampire has a soul, and feelings like other people. Most significantly, he/she is cursed with a conscience. Since this form of vampire shares the

common necessity for stealing human blood, severe consequences usually result: guilt, despair, and all manner of internal struggles and conflicting emotions. Yes, those authors knew what they were doing, all right.

Barnabas Collins is just one example of a Reluctant Vampire. See ROSS, MARILYN for details.

Another variation is the Scientific Vampire, whose popularity can be easily traced to the modern mind's distaste for magic and supernatural explanations. Thus, in place of the curses and Satanic influences of old, we have modern bloodsuckers born of bacteria, evolution, or even outer space (see, respectively, MATHESON, STRIEBER, and GOU-LART.) This type of vampire is found more and more often in contemporary works, so holy water may well be obsolete by the end of the century, at least as a means of fighting vampires.

The fourth and final archetype is the Heroic Vampire, probably the most recent innovation, although its seeds were planted long ago with the Reluctant Vampire. I suspect that it is the more secular, liberal-minded nature of modern society that is responsible for the Heroic Vampire. Are we, perhaps, more ready to concede that vampirism, even Undeath, is merely another form of alternative lifestyle? Or is it simply that we are more honest in our identifications today? Whatever the reason, the fact remains that vampires today are not only not portrayed as villains, nor even as pitiable victims, but are sometimes endowed with courage, kindness, and the cleanness of consciences.

For the most extreme example here, I refer you to the work of CHELSEA QUINN YARBRO.

All these categories tend to overlap, of course, when it comes to the practical business of creating and describing vampiric characters. There is no reason that a Scientific Vampire cannot be Hellish, Reluctant, or Heroic too. Fair's fair.

3. *Two households, both alike in infamy.* Truth, it has often been said, is stranger than fiction. Perhaps this is so. Certainly, the literature of horror has occasionally taken a leaf or two from reality.

Countess Elizabeth Bathory (1560-1614) is the most famous genuine vampire in history. Popularly known as "The Blood Countess,"

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David G. Hartwell, Reviews Editor; Gordon Van Galder, Managing Editor.

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Elizabeth (or Erzbet) believed that she could preserve her youth and beauty by bathing in the blood of other human beings. Over the course of a decade, such cosmetic treatments depopulated the peasantry surrounding Csepel Castle in northwestern Hungary. Most of the victims were young women, and, depending on which account you care to believe, anywhere from fifty to five hundred individuals were eventually killed. The last time I checked, Countess Elizabeth Bathory was listed in *The Guinness Book of World Records* as mankind's most prolific mass murderer. Amateur division, that is.

(For info on the Countess's fictional exploits, see Appendix.)

The historical Dracula, Prince Vlad II (approx. 1431-1476), killed an even greater number of people, but he had the full authority of a recognized government behind him. Dracula (the name is a nickname meaning "son of the dragon") was three times the military ruler—or *vornik*—of Wallachia, a province of what is now Romania, adjacent to the more Romanian region of Transylvania. Although still regarded by some Romanians as a national hero who defended the land against medieval Turkish invaders, Dracula was also famous for the bloodthirsty way he dealt with his subjects and political enemies. Indeed, his favorite means of execution earned him the additional nickname, Vlad the Impaler ("Vlad Tepes"). He was not, however, known as a vampire—until a British novelist, four centuries later, was inspired to turn the impaler into the supreme *nosferatu* of English literature.

See STOKER, BRAM.

The bloodlines of both Bathory and Dracula surface frequently, and often mingle, in the fictions ahead. Now armed with these tidbits of historical trivia, you should encounter no difficulty in recognizing their shadows wherever they may appear.

Onward!

The Transylvanian Rating System



The History of the Vampire

The word "vampire" made its first appearance in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1734, a mere eighty-five years before John Polidori penned the first Victorian vampire story, but blood-drinking monsters have haunted the imagination since the days of antiquity.

There is a vampire in *The Odyssey*, for instance. Between his encounters with the Cyclops and the sorceress Circe, the Greek hero Odysseus mistakenly accepted the hospitality of King Antiphatas of Laistrygon, who promptly devoured the blood of one of Odysseus's crewmen. Oddly enough, this earliest of vampires was said to dwell in a land of perpetual daylight "where the daybreak follows dusk." (Obviously, things have changed since then. . . .) Elsewhere in this same epic, the hungry shades of the dead gather around Odysseus to lap at the blood of a sacrificed goat. (Some things haven't changed a bit!)

The ancient Greeks also told of the *lamia*, a seductive serpent-woman who preyed on both small children and lovesick youths. Over the years, the *lamia* would become increasingly confused with the sort of sexy vampress so dear to our nightmares, until today the terms are literally synonymous.

In the modern era, the vampire moved gradually from folklore to poetry to prose. Human vampires like Elizabeth Bathory helped shape the myth as we know it today, as may have the Catholic Church. The communion ritual established a link between blood and immortality, you see, and Undeath was often portrayed as the inevitable consequence of excommunication. In addition, an entire catalog of real-life diseases (cataplexy, porphyria, anemia, rabies) have been assigned partial credit for the invention of vampirism.

The myth is believed to have reached England as early as the eighth century, and was by then a mixture of Slavic, Scandinavian, and Greek superstitions. Aside from an occasional ghost story, however, the

vampire remained invisible in art and literature for several more centuries. Shakespeare never mentioned the Undead, nor did any of his contemporaries or predecessors.

Then, during the seventeenth century, the vampire bat was discovered in the New World and the legend got a definite shot in the arm (for which today's special effects experts should be truly thankful). A wave of vampire epidemics swept across Europe in the 1730s and suddenly the Living Dead became the subject of reams of earnest Continental non-fiction.

Things now start happening very fast.

The German poets discover the vampire first, in the late eighteenth century. Ossendfelder writes "The Vampire." Burger writes "Lenore." Goethe provides "The Bride of Corinth." These verses, to varying degrees, all exploit the now-familiar image of the vampire lover, seducing and destroying its victim simultaneously.

In France, the notorious Marquis de Sade includes a sequence in his 1791 novel, *Justine*, in which the titular heroine falls prey to a crazed nobleman who lusts for the *agor* of women's blood. True, the Comte de Gernade employs surgical lancets rather than fangs, but already Counts were starting to get a bad name. . . .

Meanwhile, across the Channel, poets in England were quick to follow the Germans' lead. 1779 brought "Thalaba the Destroyer" by Robert Southey, followed in 1816 by John Stagg's "The Vampire." Still, the vampire had yet to really claim his place in novels or short fiction.

Until . . .

POLIDORI, JOHN

"The Vampire" (UK: *The New Monthly Magazine*, April 1819; 20 pp.)

"We will each write a ghost story," said Lord Byron, the notorious Romantic poet, one day during a "wet, ungenial summer" in 1818. His companions are fellow poet Percy Bysshe Shelley; Shelley's soon-to-be wife, Mary Godwin; and a young doctor with literary aspirations, John Polidori. All are English folk who have fled to Switzerland in the wake of various scandals.

Though none realize it, this is a momentous occasion. As a result of Byron's playful suggestion, modern fiction is about to be provided with two of its most enduring monsters. Mary Godwin, the future Mary Shelley, will create *Frankenstein* that summer, while Polidori will literally introduce "The Vampire" to English prose. Thus was born the primal ancestor of Dracula, Carmilla, and all the others to come.

Imagine: If the rain had not kept the party indoors all summer, whatever would horror movies be about today?

"The Vampire" itself is a short, cynical story about a discolored creature preying upon the weaknesses of European society, especially the upper classes. The Undead villain, Lord Ruthven, is a suave, decayed figure who requires the blood of a living woman just once a year to preserve his immortal existence. His evil, however, is not confined to these annual homicides. Lord Ruthven exists only to spread corruption and unhappiness, as the tale's naïve protagonist observes:

His companion [Ruthven] was profuse in his liberality; the idle, the vagabond, and the beggar received from his hand more than enough to relieve their immediate wants. But Ruthven could not avoid remarking that it was not upon the virtuous, reduced to indigence by misfortunes attendant even upon virtue, that he bestowed his alms—these were sent from the door with barely suppressed sneers; but when the profligate came to ask something, not to relieve his wants but to allow him to wallow in his lust or to sink him still deeper in his iniquity, he was sent away with rich charity.

Physically, Lord Ruthven is ageless and superhumanly strong, but otherwise quite human in his appearance and attributes. He can walk abroad in daylight, wine, dine, and seduce with the best. He can even be killed with an ordinary knife—but not permanently. A touch of moonlight is all that is needed to revive him, unchanged and unharmed.

And, at the end of the story, Lord Ruthven is still going about his insidious business.

Extremely popular in its day, "The Vampire" inspired numerous

theatrical productions, including at least one opera. In 1820, a French publisher even released a two-volume, novel-length plagiarism entitled *Lord Ruthven ou les Vampires* (by "Berard"). All these adaptations have dropped out of sight over the decades, but "The Vampire" itself has remained in print.

A bit more history: Polidori's story was partially based on an unfinished work by Lord Byron (later published as "A Fragment" in the poet's *Miscellany*) and for a time authorship of "The Vampire" was mistakenly attributed to Byron. Even Mary Shelley, writing in 1831, could only remember that "Poor Polidori had some terrible idea about a skull-headed woman. . . ."

Poor Polidori indeed. Although he eventually received credit for his story, he committed suicide regardless—only to be further maligned in at least three motion pictures.

James Mason portrayed Polidori as a villainous mad scientist in a TV-movie, *Frankenstein: The True Story* (1973), while in *Gothic* (1987), Timothy Spall played him, perhaps more accurately, as an obsequious, neurotic misfit: Renfield to Lord Byron's Dracula. Jose Luis Gomez was a more likeable Polidori in *Running with the Wind* (1988), but the film has him committing suicide five years early—without ever writing "The Vampire" at all. Yet another movie, Ivan Passer's *Haunted Summer*, remains unseen, but we can assume that Polidori comes to a bad end in that one as well.

Lord Ruthven would be pleased.



TIECK, JOHANN

"Wake Not the Dead" (German, 1823: 12 pp.)

To be fair, this story may have been originally published as early as 1800, thus predating POLIDORI. The English translation, though, did not appear until well after the ground-breaking impact of "The Vampire."

Anyway. . .

A loving bride returns to life as a Creature of Hell in this almost-forgotten tale of female vampirism. Walter, a powerful lord in Burgundy, enlists a sorcerer to raise the fair Brunhilda from the grave. Blinded by passion, he fails to see that his lover is now a heartless demon—until he wakes one night to find Brunhilda "drawing with her lips the warm blood from his bosom."

The vampiress herself is beautiful, slim, raven-haired, and possessed of an intoxicating breath that lulls her victims into a deep sleep. Like Lord Ruthven, Brunhilda thrives on moonlight as well as blood, so Walter's only chance is to stab her through the heart on the first

night of the new moon. If he can last that long.

More so than "The Vampire," Tieck's story (also published as "The Bride of the Grave") emphasizes the erotic side of vampirism. Brunhilda is irresistible, and that is where the danger lies.

Later, more famous vamps would follow her example.



HOFFMAN, E.T.A.

"Aurelia" (1820: 20 pp.)

Although framed by a discussion of vampirism, this murky tale of a young Count's strange wife has less to do with the Undead than either POLIDORI or TIECK. Aurelia herself turns out to be more of a ghoul, feeding on the flesh of the dead instead of the blood of the living.



GOGOL, NICOLAI

"Viy" (1835: 35 pp.)

The word "vampire" never appears in this Russian account of witchcraft and devilry. The witch in question drinks blood, however, and later rises from her tomb. What else does she need to get into this library, a signed certificate from Vlad the Impaler?

Anyway, Homa Brut, a student of philosophy, is called to read prayers over the dead body of a Cossack's daughter. The girl, he learns, was a witch with a well-known tendency to bite the local children, and Brut must spend three nights locked in a tomb with her rather lively corpse. (At one point, the greenish cadaver jets about the chamber in a levitated coffin!) Prayers of exorcism somehow hide the philosopher from the Undead witch's eyes, but she is joined on the third night by a whole flock of demons, one of whom ("Viy") has the unexplained ability to see past Homa Brut's protective circle.

There is not a happy ending.

This story has its moments, but overall it is more fanciful than frightening and padded out with an excess of local color and ironic commentary. Russian folklore was later put to much better use in "The Family of the Vourdalak" by TOLSTOY.

"Viy" inspired a 1960 Italian vampire movie, *La Maschera del Demone*, known in America as *Black Sunday*.



(To Be Continued)

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What Is It? Some New Kind of Animal . . .

ORPHIA: Slavonic Science Fiction and Fantasy Magazine

Issue #1 (March 1990): \$4.50; 218 pages

reviewed by Richard Terra



The first issue of ORPHIA hit the stands in March . . . maybe. If you can find it. My review copy arrived unexpectedly in the mail, courtesy of the ever-vigilant staff of the NTRSF, who have powers beyond mine to secure obscure texts. You can watch over my shoulder while I take a look at it.

It's pretty hefty: sits in your hand like a book. Digest-sized, slick cover stock. We rattle through the pages (slick pages!), lots of artwork. Back to the cover . . . ORPHIA? Hmmm. Slavonic science fiction and fantasy. Let's pop it open.

Oh ho! Here it is right on page 1, A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE. The "first-ever magazine of Slavonic sci-fi in English. . . . Hey, in English: saves having to learn eight or ten other languages (are we Americans smug cultural imperialists or what?). Some nice words about East European and Soviet writers being like the stars of the southern hemisphere, known but rarely seen by us in the North. Just so, we in the West can only indirectly know their brightest stars. Nice metaphor, that. And here it is in black and white:

ORPHIA is christened after Orpheus, . . . who entered Hell alive for love. It is our love for science-fiction that gave birth to this magazine, and our will to stretch the hands of imagination through the maelstrom of political and cultural confrontation, and so to speed up its end.

A grand undertaking, this. So each month (each month? Going from a standing start as a monthly will be tough. . . .) ORPHIA will introduce 300 pages of the best from Bulgaria, Russia, the Ukraine, Belorussia, Czechoslovakia, the Yugoslav republics, Poland . . . Where? Where do I sign up?

Eagerly we turn to the table of contents. We note with pleasure a few familiar names: Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, Karel Capek (who, if memory serves, is very dead, but even so. . . .) We look with cautious wonder upon the remaining ten names—unknowns all—new stars blazing in the unseen Eastern sky? The mouth waters.

Let's take a look at that Strugatsky story, shall we? Could be

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something new. We scan the initial lines (hang on, this seems awfully familiar . . .). A quick glance back up to the title: "Natural Sciences in the World of Ghosts." Oh. Alas, our first disappointment. This story is a reprint from a 1967 collection. It's even appeared in English before (in *Now: 21st Century*, Macmillan, 1978)—and the translation was better. (Actually, the reprint is acknowledged in the introduction, where the title of the collection is translated, with charming inaccuracy, as *Lunch-Time, the 21st Century*.)

We return to the magazine with a more critical eye. Paging through it once more, more slowly, we start to note some flaws. The printing's a bit uneven: on some pages the type's a bit darker, heavier; on a few the ink has bled and the type's a bit blurred. The Strugatzky story contains a passage of internal monologue that should be italicized or otherwise set off, but is instead in quotes, as if it were spoken . . . a nit, granted, but it *does* change the character of the story (this confusing typographical convention occurs throughout the magazine).

Following the story there's a nice pictorial article about a Soviet/

West German collaboration to film the Strugatzky's *Hard to Be a God*. Looks like it'll be worth seeing—but the intro blurb starting on page 41 ends in a hyphen—and vanishes. There is no continuation in the rest of the article on the overleaf.

Well, so what? A few production glitches. It's the first issue; they'll iron these things out. Let's move on.

Two short pieces by Karel Capek, the venerable Czech writer and intellectual. These are welcome; there's just not that much of Capek's work in print in English, let alone his, so not to mention his *short* sf. Most of us only know *War With the Nests*. Not all reprints are a disappointment.

Next we go from the sublime to the ridiculous, for a story by the Yugoslav writer Zvonimir Furtinger. I had to hold my nose for this one—I doubt even Hugo Gernsback would have printed it. An aggressive alien race discovers the "Pioneer F" spacecraft in deep space, and deduces from it that humanity is unbecome; they make a shy retreat. The science is inaccurate at best; the writing abominable. Here's a sample:

Read This

Recently read and recommended by Gordon Eklund:

The Bonfire of the Vanities by Tom Wolfe. The ultimate contra-science fiction novel. At least in theory. Fact piled upon fact, detail heaped upon detail, until what one finds is that old sf chestnut: the lived-in world. Only in this instance the world happens to be our own. Or one of our own. Theoretically. I quit fifty pages from the end but I do that a lot anymore even with books I like. (And I liked this one—it's very funny.) All endings are artificial constructs anyway, so after having read several thousand in my life, who really needs another?

Hardcore by Jim Thompson. A three-novel omnibus from the tortured genius of the filthiest paperback original. Thompson wrote better in his time than (very similar) contemporaries like Mailer and Algren and nobody noticed till he was years dead. (He finished his career writing tv novelizations.) There may or may not be inspiration here for all struggling writers everywhere. Thompson journeyed far into the heart of the darkness and came back with the news that it's a screamingly funny place. These aren't his best books—those'd be *The Killer Inside Me* and *Pop. 1280*—but they're plenty good anyway.

Robert Altman: Jumping Off the Cliff by Patrick McGilligan. Subtitled "A Biography of the Great American Director," which is an accurate mini-review in and of itself. The usual artist's life—rise, peak, decline, fall. We've read it all before. Altman (at his peak) was the great modernizer (and trashier) of genres—hardboiled dicks in *The Long Goodbye*, Westerns in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, war heroics in *M*A*S*H*—and yet when he finally came up against sf—in *Quintet*—he turned solemn and serious and boring as hell. Go figure.

Parting the Waters by Taylor Branch. The best biography of Martin Luther King Jr., the greatest American of our time. Here revealed as a rather ordinary man of ordinary intellect and ordinary ability who, as history unfolds around him, gradually becomes something he never truly is: the public persona known also as Martin Luther King Jr., a truly great man. This is the reality of history as it actually is—and ought to be. Great men (and women) can be scary.

Koko by Peter Straub. An award-winning fantasy novel without (so far as I can detect) a dollop of fantasy. Well, maybe it's horror, except that the vampires and haunted castles have been replaced by search-and-destroy missions and war in Vietnam. Fervently written and peopled with characters who

appear to have stepped straight off the television screen, this reminds us that genuine drama these days is getting tough to find. Maybe that's why everybody seems to want to keep going back to Vietnam. Even a few of the people who were actually there in the first place.

The 1990 Elias Baseball Analyst. In which it is again proven that an entire universe can be replicated solely through the medium of statistics. The universe in this case being the 1989 baseball season. My favorite stat of the moment: pitchers' ground-out to air-out ratios. As always one of the few indispensable guides to life in our times.

The Baseball Book 1990 by Bill James. Not more statistics this time from the man who first popularized them but straight narrative history. (And a fine anecdotal recap of the 1989 season besides.) My number one favorite part: the fat (nearly a hundred pages of small type) section devoted to capsule biographies of every baseball person from Aaron, Henry to Anson, Adrian. (In between, among others, we get Grover Cleveland Alexander and Roger Angell.) My second favorite part: a blow-by-blow account of the 1890 baseball season in which three major leagues provided a stormy American landscape.

Donald Duck by Carl Barks. A collection of ten "novellettes" originally published between 1944 and 1952 in *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*. I grew up reading these and face a critical dilemma: trying to separate nostalgia from reality. But I still find the stories amazingly detailed and filled with marvelous characters. Barks cheated a little in that he also got to draw the pictures, but, remember, he was writing about talking ducks with names like Huey, Dewey, and Louie. No mean challenge in the verisimilitude department.

The 210th Mailing of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, May 1990. More than fifty years old and one of the last embattled outposts of the once-thriving underground community, science fiction fanzine fandom. As the literature of sf has changed over the past couple of decades, so too has the character of its fans. Once a bunch of lonely introverts willing and eager to lock themselves away in basement rooms with no company other than a battered second-hand typewriter and a \$25 Sears & Roebuck mimeograph machine, nowadays the major fanish pursuit seems to be attending marathon conventions and dressing up in barbarian costumes. Over time, as somebody once said, everything deteriorates. And players don't hit .400 anymore either.

Everybody's heart sank. All their beautiful hopes [of conquest] were ruined. They were all slowly realizing that they weren't talking about savages anymore, but rather about a well-developed culture possessing unbelievable technical resources.

"Well." It slowly dawned to the Chemist. "Then how will you explain the primitive construction of the apparatus?"

"With their extreme rationalism . . . Besides that, those creatures are very cunning. They simulate primitivism to lure us into attack. They obviously have a perfectly organized intelligence service if they have found us out."

"Impossible!" Exclaimed the Chief Engineer.

"Shut up!" The Captain cut him short. "How do I know you are not on their pay-roll? Mind you, that's not very likely."

. . . Cut that talk out! Get to work! (p. 61)

Writing like this must represent the black holes in the Slavonic and fantasy firmament. And the Stalinist/Cold War echoes sound a sour note given the magazine's mission of speeding the end of political and cultural confrontation.

Okay, so what have we got between the best and the worst? There are stories by nine other writers here.

Czechoslovakian writer Ondrej Nef offers a delightful (if somewhat lightweight piece of political satire, in the tradition of this countrymen, about a Latin American dictator and an inventor who develops a machine that eliminates any dissident citizens. Of course, no one is left standing.

Here's one from Poland. Marek C. Huber's "You Came Back, Snogga, I Knew It . . ." is the tale of a post-nuclear-holocaust dystopia. Though not particularly novel, it is well-written, and certainly as grim and pessimistic as anything produced during the Anglo-American New Wave infatuation with such themes. Huber makes the unfortunate choice of killing his characters off during an attempted escape just as they're about to become interesting.

Soviet writer Svetoslav Loghinov's "The Guard at the Pass" is a rather moody, muddled fantasy about a border guard between the world of the real and the rational and the fantastic and the insane, vaguely reminiscent of Zelazny's *Jack of Shadows*. It is too long for the skim story told on the whole not a very good piece of work. "Virtual Hero" by Ghenady Prashkevich, also from the U.S.S.R., is a brief alternate worlds fantasy that bursts its own bubble by presenting itself in the end as only a series of revisions by the writer, and thereby reduces itself to fluff.

Then we have a suite of half a dozen stories by Bulgarian writers, all more or less novices, according to the introduction. The best among them is Svetoslav Nikolov's "Vergilius and the Water," concerning an android poet left by advanced extraterrestrials to observe the toxic effects of lead-lined aqueducts and their role in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Though overall the story is a bit weak and unfocused, Nikolov's writing is vigorous and polished. Here's a talent worth watching for in the future.

What else? There's a prose poem/fragment by Svetlana Pencheva—not much to go on. Velichka Nastradinova's "Miss Witch" is a long, rambling piece that unfortunately suffers from a bad case of cuteness. There are two short works by Velko Milov, heavy on atmosphere and philosophizing, but with a certain poetic charm. The premise of his "Beating the Air"—in which people convert themselves into self-aware winds—lends itself very well toward an amusing, Bradbury-esque love story.

And finally, here at the back, is the first installment of a serial: "Along the Wall," by Lyubomir Nikolov (who also just happens to be *ORPHIA*'s Literary Editor; whether Lyubovir and Svetoslav Nikolov are related I don't know, but it seems a safe bet). Though not particularly innovative, and weighted down by some hefty expository lumps, "Along the Wall" is a readable space romp about a starship crewman lost on a planet with hostile nasties and cuddly animal-people: I think I see something like a cross between *Fuzzy Sapiens* and an old *Planet Stories* adventure beginning to gel here. Have to wait for the April issue, I guess.

All in all, the emphasis in the fiction here seems to be on mood, atmosphere and character over ideas, settings, or plot mechanics,

though the better pieces manage to achieve a balanced blend. The translations are by and large quite good, though at times a bit vague or murky. The editors use the irritating convention of separating a closed quote from its attribution with a period rather than a comma. ("So you get things like this," He said.) And there are some occasional puzzling word choices. But on the whole, admirable, professional work. The translators and their sources are unfortunately not identified.

ORPHIA #1 has some other nice features. There's a colorful center-spread gallery of Bulgarian art, with commentary (which is, unfortunately, only loosely tied to the works illustrated). Some nice work, though, in style unlike those you see here in the West. A "Science Orbit" feature article about psychic surgery in the U.S.S.R. occurring *via television*. The wonders of science . . . and credulity. A one-pager on Soviet and East European rock bands, and a statement that the L.P.s will be available from *ORPHIA* (the entrepreneurial spirit seems to have found fertile ground here). A short article on Polish fantasy films (a bit murky, that one). And an over-enthusiastic piece on a visit to a Pan-slavic convention in the Ukraine.

Well. Hmmm. Quite a mixed bag of stuff. This *ORPHIA* comes across as a curious amalgam of the novel and the familiar. The physical layout reminds me a lot of *OMNI*: the graphic design is quite good, and the combination of art and text on the title page of each piece, right down to a credit for the artwork, seems a direct borrowing. Visually, *ORPHIA* stands even with *American* and *fantasy* digests.

Other aspects call to mind *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and *Reader's Digest*, oddly enough. With a heavy larding of fan magazine enthusiasm and amateurism. The content itself is more reminiscent of a U.S. small press magazine or fanzine—there's much that I find encouraging, but there is also still plenty of room for improvement.

All in all, a valiant effort. One has to wonder if they'll survive: it's got to be horrendously expensive to produce a slick, four-color magazine in Bulgaria, where the publisher is based. A monthly, to boot. I have no idea what their newsstand distribution will be like, but you might want to risk taking out a subscription and see what happens: you send your money (yipes! \$40.00) to a bank in Switzerland and your mailing info to Sofia, Bulgaria (addresses below). I have no idea how well the magazine will hold up in the international mail system.

Whether you subscribe or not, *ORPHIA* deserves attention, and bears watching. Let's hope they get some better material. They do promise they'll be having work by Kir Bulychev, Stanislav Lem, Olga Larionova, Joseph Nesvadba and Vladimir Savchenko, among others, in future issues. In the era of *glamour* and *perestroika*, it seems likely we'll be seeing a lot of new and interesting material from Russia and Eastern Europe; maybe *ORPHIA* will be the showcase for translations of the best of it. I wish them luck.

Subscription information:

Send mailing address to: ORPHIA

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1504 SOFIA
Bulgaria

Send check or bank order to: The BHF Bank

135 Seestrasse
8027 Zurich
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(WPC account # 1305-0-1)

Note: You may wish to simply send your check to the address in Sofia, and let *show* mail the check to Switzerland. The subscription form is unclear on this point. They also request a self-addressed stamped envelope, which doesn't work for overseas mail unless you buy some international reply coupons (IRCs). Good luck! ▴

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Science and Literature

Continued from page 1

The meaning I see "literature" moving toward as we approach the terminal decade of the century is that which can be entailed in a certain circuit of interpretation.

The denotative shift then, paradoxically, while it is empowered largely by the notion of textuality that falls out from the work of critics such as Barthes, Derrida, and De Man, nevertheless moves away from the late modernist notion of text into an area of textuality, or rhetoricity, where denotation as we know it may just possibly not hold much sway.

I have located the force behind this shift in the realm of science. To the extent that the rigors of the last twenty years in poststructuralist criticism can be ascribed to the rigors that the structuralists who may or may not (depending on which critical scenario you follow) have come before them developed out of a sense of intellectual competition with the hard sciences, we might really rest our case.

But there is of course the recent technological advent of the computer/word processor, following in the wake of computerized typesetting that began in the '60s and created the paperback revolution—a revolution that continues with the explosion in desktop publishing. These have certainly produced a shift in the amount of print comparable to the typewriter and the linotype. Thus it seems reasonable to expect another denotative shift. But the word processor also exerts its specific technological pressure, detextualizing the origin of those pieces of language generated on them by recording them in a form so malleable that the notion of discrete draft vanishes, and by disseminating them in a form so reproducible that at least one dealer in contemporary first editions and literary manuscripts, who makes his livelihood from the inflation of exchange value in his chosen objects that is the material support for fame, for literary reputation—if not literary value itself—once spent an hour explaining to me that the word processor, in tandem with the Xerox machine, had destroyed Literature as we know it. "My clients," said this gentleman, whose annual income is written in six figures, "want original manuscripts, not original disks—but today there are too many things whose original or final versions exist *only* as Xerox copies or as printouts; my people simply won't pay for such things. They want originals—but here the originals are simply a temporary electronic configuration of impulses moving through a chip that is only then copied onto a disk; and that copy is then reproduced again as a printout . . ." Here he shook his head, as the meaning of literature shifted away from the notion of a text, directly from under his economic feet and toward that of some Baudillardian simulation. He concluded: "An 'original manuscript' is meaningless in such a context; and they know it."

There are two semantic-syntactic markers already in place for the shift I am describing. First is the linguistic convention by which we speak of the "literature on a given genre." If we combine with this the concept of metafiction (a concept which holds, say, that all fiction is *about* other fiction), we are not very far from a linguistic situation in which Melville's *Moby-Dick* is not only an example of a novel but is also part of the literature on the novel, since what it is "about"—metaphorically speaking—is not whaling so much as all the novels that came before it, all the novels it is similar to, all the novels that it differs from.

The semantic form that awaits this denotative move is the phrase, "the literature of a given genre." When such a form/meaning, under the continued pressure of metafictional assumptions and critical rigor, finally comes to displace the form "the literature on a given genre," and by such a displacement manages to equate the genre with the commentary on that genre, then the shift that I am describing—to literature as anything that enters a certain circuit of interpretation—will be in place.

Someone else can then take up the problem of locating where it will go after that.

But here, this evening, I intend to look back, rather than ahead. In the middle of the nineteenth century, in Paris, Baudelaire declared:

The time is not distant when it will be understood that a literature that refuses to make its way in brotherly concord with science and philosophy is a murderous, suicidal literature.

At about the same time in London, in 1851, William Wilson published his *Little Earnest Book Upon a Great Old Subject* with Darton & Co., in which, among many other topics, he discusses a novel called *The Poor Artist* by R. N. Home. Home's novel showed his poor artist as someone interested in the progress of nineteenth century science at least as much as Baudelaire across the Channel—an interest of which, clearly, Wilson approved, for he wrote: "We hope it will not be long before we have other works of Science-Fiction, as we believe such works likely to fulfill a good purpose, and create an interest, where, unhappily, science alone might fail." Then Wilson's little earnest book goes on for several more pages to praise "the poetry of science."

Wilson's use of "Science-Fiction" is the earliest known juncture of the words "science"/"fiction" in English—a juncture that first occurs only eleven years after William Whewell, in his *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (1840), coined the word "scientism." (The most recent edition of the OED gives an earlier use of "scientist" from 1834, when an anonymous reporter, describing the proceedings of a scientific society, reports an "intelligent, ingenious" gentleman, among a number standing in a hallway, debating what to call the practitioners of the new knowledge, suggesting that they follow the model of "art/artist" with "science/scientist"—a gentleman whom, Dr. Duane Roller of the University of Oklahoma History of Science Library Collection feels is—as is, very likely, the author of the article—Whewell himself.) But what both Baudelaire and Wilson suggest is simply the nineteenth century's particular brand of enthusiasm for the burgeoning science.

Sadly what answers Baudelaire's and Wilson's exhortations, however ("The time is not distant when it will be understood that a literature that refuses to make its way in brotherly concord with science and philosophy . . .")—"We hope it will not be long before we have other works of Science-Fiction . . ."), is largely a silence—at least a silence represented in English by the seventy-five years it took for that juncture of "science" and "fiction" to occur naturally again.

When it did, in the pages of Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* in its Ur-form, "scientification," in 1926, and—in 1929—once more as "science fiction," the term we use today, what the preceding silence on the topic of "science fiction" probably means, more than anything else, is that there is no connection or influence from Wilson to Gernsback—or to the reader who, in a letter to Gernsback, emended "scientification" into the easier "science fiction."

Indeed, it's reasonable—even imperative—to argue that what Wilson meant by "Science-Fiction" and what we mean by "science fiction" today are not the same. Because of the shift in context, they could not possibly be.

But in order to describe a little more clearly what we mean when we say science fiction, today, we must interrogate that context—examining what we have characterized, with some irony, as a seventy-five-year silence. Because that silence represents the hegemony of the modernist concept of literature: a set of texts of a certain order to value.

The silence I write of is, of course, the silence of repression. If we interrogate that silence for even moments, we see it stands over a loud and vicious battle, shot through with appropriations and misprisions, outright theft, much anger, as well as impassioned and vociferous shuntings, all taking place back and forth across and about a border which, as our vision of the battle around it clarifies, loses its specificity in the same proportion, till finally we must realize that the silence we began with served the primary critical purpose of allowing us to hypostatize a "border" in the first place.

It is, of course, the border between the literary and the paralytic—and whether it exists as anything other than a manifestation of hypostatization and repression, it nevertheless serves the critical purpose of highlighting the fact that certain interpretive codes are organized in one manner over here—and certain others are organized in another manner over there—regardless of the rhetorical turbulence that cedes and steals across it, that has always-already—as a border—obliterated it.

We have already referred to the printing explosion of the 1880s. Suddenly it became necessary to make gross categorizations of texts—often because there were now so many of them. The emergence of that necessity was one situation the change in the meaning of the word "literature" was a response to. The same print shop that printed *The Yellow Book* on Mondays and Tuesdays printed penny-dreadfuls on

Paul Williams
from *Rock and Roll: The 100 Best Singles*

Martha and the Vandellas
"Dancing in the Street"

Bring the millennium. Whether your vision of the apocalypse is religious (trumpet blowing, the dead rising from their graves) or political (streets and steps filled with people who won't be denied any longer) or simply ecstatic, this record seems guaranteed to push your buttons, to conjure up your vision in no uncertain terms. Dance records tend to be, and usually intend to be, ordinary, repetitive, safe, but there is nothing ordinary about this one. It unfailingly evokes the exceptional—one of the first true planetary songs, an anthem for all spontaneous gatherings, all sudden outpourings of free human energy. The songwriters and producers probably didn't conceive of it this way, but anyone who hears "Dancing in the Street" immediately recognizes it as an even the quintessential hymn of revolution, riot, and rapture.

And our natural response is, we want to join the party. So okay, having acknowledged the song's significance, I need to find a way to explain something difficult, which is that it is ultimately the *sound* of the record, rather than what it means (to me or anyone else), that determines its greatness. This is confusing, because I could also say that the sound of the record gives it its meaning, which is true, and then it might seem again like "meaning" is the ultimate determinant, or at least an always convenient reference point for discussing why a song is loved.

But I say the sound is the more accurate reference point, because meaning is generated by our response to the sound, and for a record to be truly great, truly alive, it must have the power to generate new meaning every time we listen—not necessarily different, not necessarily the same, but necessarily fresh and of the moment. A great sound, to me, is something alive, that can be returned to again and again as a source of inspiration and nourishment. An explanation of what a song means, on the other hand, is dead, not alive; it becomes static information; it doesn't change; it suggests a predetermined response.

Great rock and roll records refuse to be limited to attached, remembered, predetermined responses. Part of their greatness is their continuing power to break through such straitjackets and waken us to this new reality in which we're living.

Let me further clarify that to me the lyrics are a part of a record's sound, in the sense that words (or the sound of words) generate different images depending on how and when they're heard, and depending on the synergy between the sound of the words (or the images they provoke or the feelings aroused through the stories they tell) and the sound of the music, of the rhythm, of the singer's voice. It all works together, the elements of the performance have a collective impact, and it's a trick of the mind that makes us think after the fact that we can separate out the words and use them to measure what the song's "about."

So: forget what you remember, and listen again to "Dancing in the Street." It sounds magnificent. The horn riff that begins it. Martha Reeves' amazing voice, and the space the record builds around it, some kind of unique landscape, you can almost see it, all shadows and light, darkness and depth. And the incredible crash of the beat—rumor has it producer Ivy Joe Hunter banged tire chains on the floor to get the sound he wanted—it sounds simple but you can't get the same feeling from any other record. The sublime drive and ferocious intensity of James Jamerson's bass-playing. "Calling out around the world . . ."

I'm not saying this song has a great message. I'm saying the power of the performance and the response it provokes in us *are* the message. We hear this sound and know without a doubt that yes, the time is right. Whatever that may mean.

The music comes first. With it, we create our own history.

First release: Gordy 7033, July 1964

Wednesdays and Thursdays and catalogues of industrial parts for new textile machines on Fridays and Saturdays.

The notion of literary hackwork took on a new force and presence among the practices of writing. The hackney, an ordinary cab horse, used for workaday transportation about London, lent itself as metaphor to this process. And the hack writer, as distinguished from the author, became a figure of graphesis, the apple of Ephephion's eye—Ephephion, that macaronic chimera who, in recent years, has come to stand for publishing itself, a creature with the tail of a lion, the body of a snake—and the head of a jackass.

Since it was impossible to read it all—and decide which penny-dreadfuls were written with style, wisdom, and art and which were not, which catalogues of industrial parts were written with wit, intelligence, and a sense of the world and which were not—the notion of genre necessarily became even more forceful; and it was simply more convenient to dismiss certain genres out of hand—the industrial catalogue and the penny-dreadful among them. If literature consisted of texts of a certain order of value, then those texts—and by extension, those genres—which were not of that order of value must not be literature, *Q.E.D.* Today we speak of that split as the split between the literary genres and the paraliturgical genres—the paraliturgical genres including mysteries, westerns, science fiction, pornography, comic books, popular song lyrics, film and television scripts, ephemeral reviewing, the bulk of academic criticism, advertising copy, street signs and the instructions on the back of the box . . .

That is to say, paraliterature produces the vast, the looming, the

overwhelming majority of the texts that most of us encounter over any given day.

What had begun as convenience had become internalized as code. Interpretation was saved for the best and the brightest—for literature. But there were material pressures forcefully stabilizing this generic split. And we must cite them too if our analysis is to harbor any force, any pressure of insight.

Both Mark Hillgates and W. H. Auden have written about the class splits that accompanied the huge rise in public education that followed on, and was in many ways empowered by, the expansion in printing—following on the rise in population that was itself a response to the burgeoning range of informal and formal medical knowledge, from hygiene and diet to vaccinations. The sons of the middle class studied the classics, the "greats," and a modicum of history, while the sons of tradesmen studied science and engineering, and never the twain even spoke to each other or acknowledged one another's existence in the halls of Academe—report both Auden and Hillgates. The result was a prejudice that remains pretty much enshrined in our current university system today, in the general split between science and the humanities, and which a conference such as this one must fight openly and vigilantly against.

Certainly the alignment of current reading matter tended, in its overall patterns, to fall largely where we might expect, with the sons and daughters of the working class largely the consumers of paraliterature of the time and the sons and daughters of the middle class largely consumers of literature. The silence—that is represented by the bour-

grois/literary hegemony—is then a twofold silence: it is both a silence about the development of the paratextual and the scientific.

We have already mentioned Dryden's fellowship in the Royal Society—among the oldest and most distinguished, as well as the busiest, scientific societies of Europe. Among the numerous emblems of the silence (the repression, the space of hypostatization) I spoke of is that marvelous compendium of classical erudition and Edwardian prejudices, the 11th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*; its 29 volumes were published from 1910 to 1911. In a *Britannica* article that runs for four and a half of its oversized pages, two columns wide and in ten point type, on Dryden, while the subject, reception, and, in the case of *The Indian Queen*, even the costuming, of every one of his plays is discussed in more or less specific detail, only a single clause mentions his election to the Society in 1662, while his activities in the society (along with his marriage, the name of his wife and his three sons) are omitted as not of any particular interest.

Similarly, in an equally long article on the Royal Society itself, Dryden's membership is not mentioned at all; and that other Fellow, diarist extraordinaire and architect of the British Navy, Samuel Pepys, is granted only an italicized citation, as he figures as financial agent on the title page of Newton's *Principia* that the Society published in 1687.

In that infinitely suggestive essay, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baubelaine," during his examination of the newly-constituted urban experience of which Baudelaire was the first and possibly the greatest poet, Walter Benjamin drops interesting, if passing, suggestions. In small markets with limited, rural clientele, argues Benjamin, selection of what to buy could be based on real knowledge of the manufacture, durability, and general quality of the goods for sale. In the greater market, where the number of items of a single type is too great for any one person truly to know the complete range of material facts about them, the combination of partial ignorance and partial knowledge recapitulates into the notion of "good taste" and "bad taste," and items are purchased or shunned as they conform or fail to conform to these notions as they arise when true and complete knowledge (*peut-être ça ou "savoir absolu" . . .*) is no longer possible.

Once we have located this complicated and generalizing relation between absolute knowledge and good taste, we begin to see like relations throughout the range of political discourses practically everywhere we turn: physical strength relates to social power by the same recombinations; so does sex value and exchange value; so does craft and art; so does technology and science.

Necessarily we must point out that the most interesting interpretations in circulation today show precisely—and certain critics delight in searching such arguments from the rhetorical infrastructure upon which Benjamin mounts the very argument for such a division—how the seeds of such recomposition lie in the simple, innocent, originary concept, which turns out not to be so innocent, simple, or originary after all.

The knowledge of taste is itself a form of knowledge.

The wielding of social power always requires a certain application of mechanical strength, however minimal.

And exchangeability is itself a use, in a field where exchange is necessary . . .

Yet Benjamin's point remains fabulously seductive as we look at the recombinations art has undergone through the epoch of modernism that is itself the epoch of "literature" as we know and have known it since the turn of the century. Simply the incredible expansion to the range of tone that has occurred in eighty or ninety years suggests that something developed from something that must have been, at one point, simpler.

If James Joyce and Raymond Radiguet and D. H. Lawrence and Willa Cather were all writing novels; if John Ashbery and Gwendolin Brooks and Robert Creeley and Frank O'Hara and Charles Bernstein and Charles Olson and Rochelle Owens and Judy Grahn and W. S. Merwin and Tom Clark and Joanne Kyger and Elinore Lehman and Robert Cummings and Amiri Baraka and Marilyn Hacker and Geoffrey Hill and Michael Harper and Sharon Olds and Rosemary Waldrop and Anne Waldman and Ron Silliman and Sonia Sanchez and Bernadette Mayer and George Starbuck and James Tate and James Hoag and James Schuyler and James Merrill and James Dickey and June Jordan are all writing poetry—then something has happened that must have happened

when the English novel was Dickens, Eliot, Collins, Hardy and Reade; that had not happened when poetry was Shelley, Byron, Keats, Wordsworth, Blake, and Coleridge, all writing in the same years.

Without defining this "what" at any greater extent than we have, we must point out that something else was going on as well: while the technique of the modernists was exploding over this astonishing range, the subject matter of the modernists if anything pulled in, till—paradoxically—it seemed to reduce to the matter of the subject.

Whether it was Joyce's stream of consciousness or Proust's meticulous analysis, both were focused on the intricacies of the subject. The heroes of modernism, from Henry James to Gertrude Stein to Hemingway and Faulkner, are fundamentally monologists. And their subject—whether wounded, wondrous, or insistently ordinary—is the subject.

The current literary-critical code, organized almost wholly about the priority of the subject, is still, overwhelmingly, the measure at which literature is taken. Ashbery's claim that his otherwise incomprehensible poem "Leaving the Atocha Station" represents the movement of the mind. But why not the movement of history? the movement of a leaf falling to the ground? the movement of chemical change spreading through a mixture of two active chemicals? The intricately erudite constructions out of history shored up against the ruins, by Guy Davenport, present the evidence and commentary on the civilized sensibility—consciousness again. The more eccentric the rhetorical signifier, the more subjective we are to assume the interpreted signified.

But what has been happening outside the literary precincts since "science," after that initial, futile stutter in 1851, finally managed to join with "fiction" in 1929? First of all, sentences have been written and embedded in texts that comprise a genre which has stabilized and organized its interpretive codes according to a different priority—sentences that simply cannot be read in any exhaustive, or even satisfying manner, simply by use of the literary codes of interpretation.

In 1942, Heinlein wrote: "The door dilated."

In 1953, Pohl and Kornbluth wrote: "I rinsed delipatory soap from my face with the trickle from the fresh-water tap."

In 1964, Niven wrote: "Our little ship cruised along through the monopole magnet mining operations in the outer asteroid belt of Delta Cygni."

I leave you to choose your own from the '70s, '80s . . . '90s.

But the first meaning of Heinlein's "The door dilated" is still, "This society has the technology to create its aperture doorways," and it means that well before it says anything about the fictive or the auto-rsial subject.

The first meaning of Pohl and Kornbluth's "I rinsed delipatory soap from my face with the trickle from the fresh-water tap" is that houses in this future society have both fresh-water and non-fresh-water supplies—and that the fresh-water supply was, at this particular point, only a trickle. And again, it means that before it tells anything about the fictive subject.

And the first meaning of Niven's "Our little ship cruised through the monopole magnet mining operations in the outer asteroid belt of Delta Cygni" is that, in the future, the location, the object, and the methodology of mines will be different from what they are today. And it means this before it means anything about the pilot of the ship, a miner in the mines, or the author of the sentence.

The codes with which we must read such sentences are organized around the object—not the subject. And to read them otherwise before reading them in terms of the object is to misread them in a way that strikes the competent reader of sf not as ingenious but merely wrong.

When I have made such statements in the past, some people have heard me as saying that, because the literary codes of interpretation are organized around the subject and the science fictional codes of interpretation are organized around the object, somehow, therefore, literature is non-referential while science fiction is referential. This is so far from my meaning that for many years the misreading simply escaped, or baffled, me. The non-referentiality of science fiction seemed so blatant that I did not even think it had to be mentioned, much less stressed. These spaceships, these alien races, these parallel universes, these dilating doors, these low-fresh-water supplies, these monopole magnet mines do not exist. One could mean them. But how could one refer to them?

There is of course a larger argument that covers the non-referentiality of both literary and para-literary genres. Language by itself does not refer. People refer their language to things. Only something with intentionality can refer his/her/its language to something. And while, through a whole host of rhetorical strategies, language can represent an intention in a text (can even represent the writer's intention to refer the language of his or her text to the objects named by the text), the representation of an intention is no more an intention than the representation of a rose is a rose.

Thus, texts do not refer.

They can only mean.

Referentiality is a *use-context* that intentional creatures from time to time place meanings into.

Science fiction is esthetically interesting precisely because it has generated a complex set of interpretive codes for critiquing the object that have clearly outstepped even the illusion of referentiality that has so plagued critics of mundane fiction.

But despite this ringing silence of offers when we listen for any appeal in it to reference, the relation of science to fiction in science fiction is nevertheless—and necessarily—intimate and intricate. It is intimate because, for better or for worse, science provides the grounding of possibility that makes the sentences that constitute the science fiction text make more sense. It is intricate because it is only a grounding; the meanings that can be elaborated from that ground can mean both possible or impossible situations. Indeed, over any range of *s* texts—that's any range of good, valuable, brilliantly observed and vividly thought-out *s* texts—the meanings are far more likely to be impossible than possible ones. In science fiction, science produces meaning; but it does not produce value—at least in the way that it produces value in the realm of science itself: by seeking to speak the truth, or at least the pragmatically useful. Indeed, as the complexity of literature—back reading through our reading of Benjamin—asks us always to hypostatize a reality and a subject that literature, through an interpretive circuit, is constantly showing us to be illusory (now denying referentiality of fictive language, now dismantling the very notion of the subject that a moment before it was striving to master), science fiction asks us always to hypostatize a science that—through interpretive moves similarly constituted—shows the object to be an analytic construct not only through scientific experiment but also a linguistic construct. "The color and taste of the weight D-flat" projects an analytics of the sayable that is even finer than any scientific analytics of the testable—and, indeed, it is precisely that greater linguistic fineness of that speakable analytic grid that allows us to speak and write about new things that scientific analytics shows us for the first time.

Aphra Behn's "numbship," from her novel *Oroonoko* (1688), is the sayable form of the electric eel fifty-two years before the discovery—and more important, the naming—of electricity with Benjamin Franklin

and his immediate predecessors in the 1740s.

Literature (and the literary genres) is constituted almost wholly as a set of codes to critique the subject. Marginal to it, science fiction organizes its interpretive code around a critique of the object—codes that are not representational, that are not mired in any sort of necessary referentiality.

When, in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx wrote, "The social Revolution . . . cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future," I suspect he was drawing a rhetorical figure from the same gallery from which Baudelaire and Wilson had drawn theirs: a rhetoric that had already associated science, the future, and social change—an association science fiction was to sediment into one of the broadest of its genre conventions. (When I argue, as I often do, that science fiction developed largely outside the literary precincts, or that it begins properly in the American pulps during the first decades of the 20th century, I am not saying that it is some sort of *rei generis* eruption without a history or that it does not have its clear and traceable roots well back into the 19th century and before. I am only saying that, in just the same way that, through the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries science and fiction had to separate themselves out from one another before either could be said to be an influence on the other, so from the printing explosion of the 1880 up through Campbell's appointment as editor of *Asimov* in 1937, literature and science fiction had to separate themselves out for either one actually to exist in its present form, much less for any dialogue or critique between them to articulate itself.)

So, if literature is shifting its meaning, is it perhaps shifting its meaning as well? And is that shift in meaning taking it closer to literature? In fact, let us ask right out:

Is science fiction literature?

Let me answer, equally directly:

Certainly not according to the modernist meaning of literature.

Might science fiction become literature as the meaning of literature continues to shift?

Here the answer is more complicated. It will become literature only if postmodernist interpretive circuits broaden and recompile themselves enough to analyze that non-representational, non-referential critique of the material and political object (rather than the subject) of has been in play with at least since it rearticulated its name in 1929. For the truth is, science fiction represents a recomplicated process of writing that hypostatizes the existence of literature in a way that postmodern literary interpretation should be comfortable enough with by now, since postmodern literature has been doing the same thing in its own attempt to show its non-identity with itself since it decided its topic was text and textuality. ▴

This paper was delivered at the Society for Science and Literature annual meeting, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Friday September 27, 1989.

Death Arms by K. W. Jeter

New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989; \$14.95 hc; 183 pages

reviewed by Glenn Grant

With *Death Arms*, K. W. Jeter completes the thematic series of *sf* noir novels known as the "L. A. Trilogy." The first book, *Dr. Adder*, was written in 1971, but was such a groundbreaking, disturbing, and unpublished novel that it wasn't published until 1984. By then, many of *Dr. Adder's* most controversial elements had become commonplace cyberpunk identifiers—the protagonist's nihilistic attitude, the power-crazed televangelist, the underworld of prostitutes and junkies sporting perverse surgical modifications, and so forth. The second L. A. novel, *The Glass Hammer* (1985), is probably one of the all-time *sf* classics (typically, the world has been slow to recognize it as such). Few *sf* novels published in the 1980s were more brilliantly constructed.

Although the last to be published, *Death Arms* was written before *The Glass Hammer*, and is not as finely controlled, nor as complex in structure. Still, it contains a number of touches worthy of Jeter's mentor, Philip K. Dick, particularly the heroic psychonaut who's going to be sent, not into space, but "into the collective unconscious of the race." There's also an ingenious (if highly implausible) weapon which

tracks its intended victims by their brainwave patterns: a slow bullet that really does have somebody's name on it.

As always, Jeter's prose is hard-edged and spare, full of visceral images and unsentimental introspection. His vision of a depopulated L. A. is sketchy but bleak, featuring the requisite Ballardian details (drained swimming pools included). The storytelling is swift-footed, passionate, and intense.

All three novels begin with the same pattern: a disaffected and inarticulate Californian teenager leaves his cloistered suburban "home" for the bright lights and dark alleys of Los Angeles. He allows himself to be manipulated and used in various ways, until he is forced onto a path of self-discovery. This road also leads to revelations about his father—who would have a lot to answer for, were he not already dead. The reticent youth is assisted, prodded, and often kicked along his path by a number of street-savvy archetypes who all seem to know what's going on, but who also have an annoying habit of keeping the protagonist in the dark.

In *Death Arms*, the confused youth is R. D. Legger, who returns to Los Angeles from a workers' suburb floating off the coast of Japan. Most of California has been deserted for twenty years, its population chased away by a state-wide psychic phenomenon known as the Fear, and now some expatriates are filtering back. Legger soon discovers that he is being watched by SCRAP, a corporation that is trying to reclaim the city. He is then dragged off to the desert by a group of neurotic fugitives, reconstructing the final days of a famous assassin, Legger's father.

The characterization is hardly deep, and Legger is too often insufferably dim. Some of the characters spent their childhoods as experimental subjects in a corporate research center, leaving them with bizarre psychic powers—the most over-familiar concept in what is otherwise a fairly unusual novel. But these psychic powers are generally

of a useless and disgusting nature, such as the ability to cause recently dead animals to shuffle around as if almost alive. Some of the resulting scenes are truly horrific, some are pretty ludicrous: "A small ham bumped into Legger's foot and clung" (p. 58).

Included with this slim novel is a short essay by the author. Jeter discusses the themes of the "L. A. Trilogy" and analyzes the American social dysfunctions which generate kids like Legger. It's an angry and sharply-worded critique, but hardly necessary, as these novels speak well enough for themselves. They express the agonies particular to fucked-up suburban youth, and have nothing but foul words for the responsible authorities. They're novels with an Attitude. ▶

Glenn Grant lives in Montreal, where he edits *Edge Detector*.

Howard Mittelmark Interview with Orson Scott Card 10/19/88

In October of 1988, I interviewed Orson Scott Card for *Inside Books* magazine, a start-up soon defunct. It wasn't a very good magazine—a gossip, tabloid sort of affair (and, much worse, I eventually discovered that the publisher considered payment optional)—but it was a very enjoyable interview. I had chosen Card as an alternative to the names the publisher had been suggesting—specifically Asimov and Bradbury. My feeling was that, while still prominent and visible, Asimov and Bradbury were no longer relevant to the ever-changing geography of sci-fi. (Besides, with Heinlein dead and Clarke in Sri Lanka, if I didn't change the publisher's understanding of the field, I'd be out of assignments after those two.) Card seemed to me a good choice for the context—active and popular in the field, and in no way inaccessible to the magazine's primarily extra-generic readership. And, though I've always been uneasy about true believers of any stripe, and was uncomfortable with Card's fiction in precisely the same way I was made uncomfortable by C. S. Lewis's "Narnia" books, I was also something of a fan: I had enjoyed *Ender's Game* and *Speaker for the Dead*, and I'd just reviewed *Prentice Alvin*, which I thought was something new and worthwhile in fantasy. I was further and finally convinced by the extremely helpful Tor publicist, who did everything but dial the phone for me. Card himself was unusually helpful. Out having his computer upgraded when I first called him at home in Greensboro, North Carolina, he soon called back and the interview went on his phone bill, which goes against everything I know of writers and the publishing industry. We spoke briefly of computers before I asked him how he had begun as a writer.

OSC: I started as a playwright, back when I was about seventeen in 1968. . . . I was taking reader's theater courses very early in my career as the theater major at Brigham Young University. I started adapting Noh plays into [conventional Western] plays, and from there I went on to become a playwright, which is what I thought of myself as for about ten years. I had about five or six full-length plays produced at Brigham Young University [and] another three or four produced at community theatre, regional. I started my own theater company, which I still haven't finished paying for.

HM: Were you performing as well?

OSC: I did some, but not a lot. I'm not a particularly talented actor. But I did some pretty good directing work I think, and primarily (for a short while I think) was one of the dominant, if not the dominant, playwright in Mormon theater. But then I realized I was reaching only a very small audience.

HM: Do you mean the Mormon audience or the theater-going audience?

OSC: Both Mormon and the fact that it was theater at all. That's just not a very large segment of the American population. So I started trying my hand at fiction, and science fiction was natural because it had a short-story market . . . that was penetrable. And so I tried some short stories.

HM: Had you been reading sf?

OSC: I had read off and on. I was never an sf reader. I would never have called myself that, because I read everything. Science fiction was part of it. In fact, early in my career, I tended to step into areas that had already been trod upon by much brighter minds than mine, but I didn't know it, I wasn't that widely read. For example, I'm told that *Ender's Game* is somehow an attempt to be a synthesis or an answer to *Starship Troopers* and *The Forever War*. Well, I hadn't read either of those before I wrote the story "Ender's Game," and it astonished me to realize that Haldeman and Heinlein had both been there before. As had many other writers. . . .

HM: Is your theater company still a going concern?

OSC: No, we folded after two years, because it was \$20,000 in debt, even though it was a non-profit corporation. . . . I suppose I could have bankrupted at the time. . . . [I] still occasionally direct amateur theater, and would like to do more. The truth is, in my ideal life I would be heading a writing program, [about] writing the right way, which no one in America is doing today. . . .

HM: What are you teaching now?

OSC: I'm teaching one course at Elan College, a small Baptist college in North Carolina, just a writing course. But I have a methodology in this writing class, a subject matter, a way of approaching it, that I think is far more helpful than any class I've ever heard of. Maybe someone else is doing it somewhere else. I have one book that I have to mention, it's called *Character and Viewpoint*, from *Writer's Digest Books*. . . . It's about eighty percent of what I know about the teaching of writing. But I'd love to be teaching in a university, teaching a half-load and writing the rest of the time. I think that's my ideal life.

HM: Sure, mine too. You seem to be getting closer to it.

OSC: Actually not, because most of my credentials are in, quote, popular fiction, which, without a doctorate, is like shooting yourself in the foot.

HM: How have you made a living all this time?

OSC: Since 1978, with one nine-month exception, immediately after the recession, I have supported myself entirely with my writing.

HM: That's very impressive. Starting with what?

OSC: In 1978, starting with, really, the sale of "Hot Sleep." . . . A *Planet Called Treason* helped, but the real strength of it was a couple of contracts, a little bit of freelance editing, primarily for writing a series of audio tapes, for *Living Scriptures* of Ogden, Utah; they have been my mainstay over the years. I could never count on anything from New York; until I started working with Tor, nothing that I was ever told was true. It eventually became true, but the time schedules were never there, and I'm sure we would have been bankrupt somewhere in the process. I knew that I could always write scripts for *Living Scriptures*, and I'm very proud of the work I've done for them. It's kept my hand in dramatic writing all this time, and we're talking about somewhere over four hundred half-hour audio tapes, audio plays, that I've written, and so, the bulk of my work has been in that area. I'm now writing animated video tapes for them.

HM: Are you the equivalent of Madeline L'Engle to your church: a lay theologian?

OSC: (He laughs) No. Except in some very small circles. In fact, I am more along the line of—well, deliberately I try to cast myself as an Ambrose Bierce sort of figure. . . . When I've written specifically to Mormons about Mormonism, I've generally been satirical and comic, because I think that's my responsibility, to be a gadfly. When I write to the general public about Mormonism, I tend to, not try to convert people, but to help them see what it's like to be a person in our community.

HM: *Prentice Alvin* is fantasy, technically, but I'm not sure.

OSC: It's arguable.

HM: All of Alvin's skills as a Maker are science-based: genetics and quantum physics.

OSC: It's fantasy that feels like, that is justified on scientific grounds, and it's also an alternate world. . . .

HM: For a person claiming his first allegiance is to his faith rather than his nation, there's an incredible amount of energy displayed in the vision of America you draw [in *Prentice Alvin*]. This isn't something from an *ad* writer who just sits down and says "I need an alternate America against which to set this storyline." You've obviously read very thoroughly in nineteenth century history, and you've grown an America that almost seems truer than our own. I feel a thrill to the America you present, and it's not necessarily a complimentary one. There's a passage in *Prentice Alvin* wherein Alvin's first realizing what his job as a Maker is, and he talks about showing atoms where they belong in relationship to one another. Then he thinks "People, too," and he sees a beautiful vision of everyone knowing their place, and it almost seems an aggressively naïve version of the horrible picture of ourselves during the industrial revolution. If you follow what I'm saying here,

OSC: It almost follows the English Great Chain of Being, the class society, but that's not going to turn out to be correct. What it is the preliminary view of how human beings are organized in a community. Self-organizing beings. We do it voluntarily and we randomly create our own communities, which is what he'll discover as he tries to. . . .

HM: As he tries to impose it.

OSC: Yes, he'll find that you can't impose it. And that people will corrupt if they wish, and you can't compel. You can only teach.

HM: Live an example. Which is Jesus.

OSC: Yes, exactly. But that is Mormon. In terms of the attention to America, I am an American. Just because my allegiance to the Mormon religion is stronger, that doesn't mean my allegiance to America is weak. I care very much about that. Plus, part of some of the stories that most moved me when I was young, a part of my innermost self, I think, are some of the stories by, well, the earliest storyteller I was reading about the American frontier was Altschuler [Joseph Alexander Altschuler]. Besides the boys' books that he wrote, I also absorbed, swallowed whole, Conrad Richter's frontier. In a way, much of this is an homage to his *Trees and Fields* and *Town trilogy* [*The Trees* (1940); *The Fields* (1946); *The Town* (1950; Pulitzer Prize winner)].

HM: Are these the writers that had the most influence on you?

OSC: For this book, this milieu. Even more important, though, is that I love history, I love American history, and I feel it as my community, my epic, when I read American history. It's the story of us, as opposed to the story of them. . . . When I read Polish history, "they" seem interesting to me, but when I read American history, it's what we did. And I can't escape from that. . . . at the same time I'm a critic. As you say, I'm glad to see that it feels that way, that it feels true; I'm trying to write a truer version of American history, where tendencies are made explicit and clear. . . . The aristocracy of the American South. . . . the gentry, for example I've explicitly made it that the King is living there, that is where nobility survived. And Puritan New England is a separate country from the American compact.

HM: As it is.

OSC: Even now. But I've done some things that I wish had been different. The treatment of the Indians, as awful as it is, there are still the stories of Iroquois and Appalochee, that have Indian majorities. Where the Indians remain and are politically a part of the American process.

HM: I didn't know this. I haven't read the first two books.

OSC: You would have found that out in *Red Prophet*. It doesn't matter that much. In fact, I'm quite excited to realize that you read *Prentice Alvin* without reading the first two. I went to great effort to make it stand alone, without ever feeling like you were getting a synopsis.

HM: There were one or two points where I would have liked something clearer, but I always had the information I needed, and never was I given anything that didn't fit in this story.

OSC: I'm grateful to know that works. I'd hate to think that the book would lose potential readers just because. . . .

HM: No, it shouldn't. But a question here. There's a comment in the book that the Iroquois and the Cherokee are more white than red at this point. Is that how you're presenting them? Is there something bad going on there?

OSC: What you see in *Red Prophet* is that there's a bond with the land. It's the magic of the Reds. . . . And that has been lost, these people have become white in that sense. In another sense of course, racially, they're definitely still red. They're not physically white, and so they think of themselves as being Red, and that'll be something Alvin perceives. There's not one true way of being an Indian. It's just that society's changed and evolved. He doesn't come to the conclusion that the Indians came to, that the white man is irredeemably evil. . . .

HM: I don't suppose you've come to that conclusion.

OSC: That we're irredeemably evil? No, I don't think any society is.

HM: [*Prentice Alvin*] does reflect a Manichean sensibility, though.

OSC: I know, but the book, unlike my earlier work, does consciously deal with Mormon issues, because that's part of what I'm doing. This is in the stomping grounds of early Mormonism that I'm writing.

HM: You also do that in "Eye for Eye"—and congratulations by the way [Card had just won a Hugo for that story]. I just looked at that again, and clearly, if you take the two, that story and *Prentice Alvin*, you get two points on a line. You're pointing to something. Here's this fellow, these people who've pulled out of society as "Chosen," and there's the [material about] inbreeding and marrying within the faith: that certainly echoes something in Mormon history.

OSC: Oh yes, religious fanaticism, that's what I'm dealing with in "Eye for Eye": people who surrender their will to a powerful individual—which, by the way, has never been Mormonism, though that is the image we present to the outside world. Anybody who's been involved in any way with Church government learns that very quickly. . . . We give this illusion of having a Prophet, a president who tells us what to do and then all the Mormons hop. It's just not so. I've been involved with that, at fairly local levels of church government, and in fact everything is done by cajoling and whispering and persuading, just like in the. . . .

HM: American way?

OSC: Yeah, exactly, and if Mormons don't want to do something it doesn't happen, and the Church has found that out—sometimes to its sorrow—when they've pushed very hard for something and they've discovered the power just isn't there. Mormons do what Mormons want to do.

HM: Yes, but if you take a random sampling of twelve American eighteen-year-olds, you're not going to get ten of them going on a Mission.

OSC: Well, that's true, but then we're raised with the story that that's what one does.

HM: That's what Bush is proposing with his Youth Service, with the same principle behind it: service to the world as part of growing up.

OSC: That's why I believe in universal conscription. . . . Regardless of [whether it's] wartime or not, we should have some time where we dedicate some part of our lives.

HM: I agree with you, but I'll point out that Heinlein assumed that same idea.

OSC: Well, it is in a way, but Heinlein wanted to bring everybody into a military structure, which I find loathsome.

HM: Well, as do I. . . . but there's a certain one to one pragmatism

Lenny Bailes
Hitchhiker to Ike's Galaxy

The surreal, disjointed fantasy which Robert Shekley foists into the middle of the new *Isaac's Universe* anthology fills me with wistfulness and frustration. Shekley will assuredly be scorned for this small piece of fiction as he was for writing *Options* in 1976. Yet, in his own way, Shekley is performing a useful service, struggling to deconstruct the basic premise of the "Asimov diplomatic universe," as well as the meta-universe of reader expectation. His warmth and brilliant whimsy are mixed with the aftertaste of a stereotypical Acid Trip.

Shekley is an enigma in science fiction. Most critics remember his role in the '50s as a satirical cultural anthropologist. Shekley wrote tightly-plotted short stories crafted after the styles of Don Marquis and Frederic Brown. To the well-mastered surprise-ending style he added his own creative sociocultural extrapolation. Before Mort Sahl and Bob Dylan, Shekley was there, lampooning and speculating on Margaret Meade, Madison Avenue and MMPI.

When I started "Myxxx," Shekley's contribution to *Isaac's Universe*, I thought he was returning to this style. The book is a fairly straightforward project structured along the lines of *Modes—Harlan Ellison's World*. Asimov produces a context and five authors develop the context into short stories. This volume's theme is diplomacy—how do five sentient Galactic races relate to one another. One of these sentient races is us, the Erthoi—or Earth people in English.

The other authors tackle the book in a sequential round-robin. Each alien race gets to be guest-protagonist of one story. Shekley starts out on good behavior, detailing a colonial scene which will involve the Erthoi (you and me) with the Samian, a mysterious heavy-planet species. The Samians have no appendages. There has been speculation in the previous stories as to how they developed a tool-making, space-exploring technology in the first place.

Shekley adheres to the spirit of the project in his first few pages, showing us an Erthoi mining colony. ("The Minimal Man," I thought, it's going to be like his classic man vs. robot story.) The Samian envoy arrives, speaking in polite Asimovian mode to set up the basic plot premise—there are strange doin's in the alien ruins. (Robert Silverberg opened *Isaac's Universe* with the discovery of such a ruin by three contemporary Galactic races.)

Shekley's Samian is a philosopher, picking up on a tag from David Brin's story. Aaron (a human colonist) and the Samian trade simple textbook epistemology en route to investigate the disappearance of Aaron's son in the ruins.

The first deviation from a positionally perfect read occurs with Seashaws, a member of the Cephalonian (Dolphin) race. She comes to the Alien city as a reporter for the Ladies Club of Greater Truax and finds that it's under water.

For all the other races the city is on land. Why so?

Aaron arrives at the ruins, terminates his philosophical discourse with the Samian and gets very sick. In fact, he's soon having Alice in Wonderland hallucinations. After a little while, some walking parallelpipeds whisper in his ear that the Samians are not a polite Jovian race. They are cruel slave-masters who oppress a hidden "Samian" race of momeraths, little parallelpipeds with appendages:

It was evident at once that they were closely related to the larger Samians. As their spokesman, P. Samuelson, said, many ages ago the two races had been unified. Then the winds of change came. Separate religious holidays were declared. After that the smaller pipedons found that a decree passed in the dark and subrosa had declared the smaller ones second-class citizens, to be known hereafter as the underclass. Some of the smaller pipedons thought it was a pretty sounding name, but the more intelligent among them soon put them straight.

"Can't you see what they're trying? They want us to do all the work. That's why they're growing themselves without limbs."

So much for the "Samian mystery." Robert Shekley comes out of hiding and blithely turns out twenty-five more pages of the "Paraphysical nonsense we associate with his later writing career. Betrayed by the woman he loves, reality must dissolve. Betrayed by God or super-alien disguising themselves as God—there's a ticking bomb in the ring in his nose. Look out! So long, and thanks for all the fish.

I really wanted to read the story Shekley started about the miner and the Samian. For me, realistic existential observations from an Oblong Slice of Bacon would have been enough to deconstruct the Ike's Universe stereotypes.

(Harry Turtledove did a great job of taking the book's bible seriously. Turtledove's "Island of the Gods" is a philosophical character study which portrays individuals of the alien races in an approachable way and still makes an auctorial statement.)

From Shekley's first few pages I'd bet he still has in him to write a good, Dylanesque mindbender, no cheating. But dropping acid into the editor's coffee to replay scene from 2001 (or his own struggle with solipsism) is a concept which has passed its prime—even for organisms in the Erthoi Group Mold.

Some of us remember that "Ticket to Tranzi" was here long before Douglas Adams and Zaphod Beeblebrox. ▶

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between your work and his.

OSC: I'm not going to deny that; Heinlein was an important writer in my life. Heinlein I discovered at about the age of twelve [though] I didn't become an sf reader.

HM: Are all of the knacks [Card's term for various telepathic and telekinetic abilities] in *Larkin* rooted in folklore?

OSC: Most of them are. Sometimes I had to make up a name for them. . . . You know a torch, there was no name like that. But, in fact, calling someone in to lay hands on a woman's womb, that was done. Birch call legends, seventh sons—that's all true. [There were] dowders

and doodlebugs, after all.

HM: I'd never heard of doodlebugs [long-distance psychic feelers].

OSC: Isn't that funny? I'd never known about them, but doing the research, I found, in fact, that that's what they were called. They'd send out their bug to do their searching for them.

HM: You might want to take a look at some books from Harper & Row called "The Everyday Life in America Series." I've just read Jack Larkin's *The Reshaping of Everyday Life: 1790-1840*. It fills in all the details of daily life: what people ate, what they played, what furniture was in their homes.

OSC: One of my bibles for fantasy work is *The Last Country Life*, which is that sort of thing for medieval England. . . . I've read and loved

historics that go through all the kings and the wars, and stuff like that, but when I'm doing research, all I need to know is what they were busy doing. How did they occupy their time? It became the heart of my novel, *The Working Chronicle*. . . . I actually had the jobs that they would be doing every month of the year, so that you got an idea of the intensity and the involvement of the labors they performed. We think of our lives as being so complex: our lives are simple, compared with what they had to do.

HM: In one sense I'd agree. In another sense, I'd say nothing's ever changed.

OSC: That's more like it. We're just used to what were used to. You know, if they didn't do certain jobs, they died.

HM: Who are your favorite writers working right now?

OSC: My favorite writers working right now? There are so many answers to that. What it is that I'm dying to get in the bookstore, what I keep checking for, is whatever the latest William Goldman is. I'm always looking for that. Even though he disappoints me sometimes, I look for his work. I've read him since *Boys and Girls Together*.

HM: That's my favorite trash novel.

OSC: I don't even think of it as a trash novel, you see. We would probably disagree on that. I regard Updike as one of the greatest producers of trash novels in America. That's the trash. It's directed at a tiny elite, and speaks not at all to people, to volunteer-readers who have not learned a certain set of protocols. So, to my mind, he's not producing trash, he's actually trying to talk to people.

HM: So we can call you the Populist, Scott Card?

OSC: Absolutely. On this issue, I have nothing but a withering contempt for people who write to an elite audience.

HM: Have you read Silverberg's "The Secret Sharer?" That's a great story, but it's only accessible to sf readers; it's written in sf shorthand and assumes knowledge of certain concepts and protocol.

OSC: Absolutely, we do talk just to each other sometimes, but, then, I hope that I don't. I make a deliberate effort in all my work to never be accessible only to sf readers. So it's no great strain to me to shift voices outside the genre, because I've never really written within it. Though I'm glad to have been received as well as I have been lately.

OSC: . . . Anyway, other writers. I'm still reading Parker's Spencer books, and anything by Tim Powers. . . . I think he's one of the finest populist writers of sf. Again, he does reach outside the genre.

HM: I heard him referred to as a steampunk.

OSC: What a joke—the idea of him being considered as part of the same movement as Blaylock, [who is] profoundly . . . inaccessible, whereas Tim Powers is a pure storyteller, who's absolutely accessible.

HM: I have Robert Charles Wilson's new novel here. I see [by your quote] you liked his last, *A Hidden Place*.

OSC: I'm annoyed that I haven't gotten it yet.

HM: This is just the galley.

OSC: Usually I get galleys. They sent me galleys on . . . [the last] one. Anyway, it's whoever they want to quote from, and apparently I didn't make him a bestseller with my quote, so they'll go for somebody else. I'm not worried about it. . . . [Wilson] is a fine writer, but there are a lot of writers I admire. Who do I think is most important in sf right now? Bruce Sterling, without question.

HM: Not Gibson?

OSC: Oh, Gibson is such a private voice.

HM: You think so?

OSC: I just don't think he knows how to write any other way, which makes him extremely limited. He's very talented with what he does. [But] his most recent two books have become so self-referential that . . . I found them unreadable. I couldn't get into them, and I was disappointed in that because I found *Neuromancer* compulsively readable. But I talk to other people [and] there are some who live and die by Gibson, they think he's the most marvelous writer. There are others who cannot even grasp the language he uses. But I don't think of him as being important to sf, in the sense of being an influence, because he

can only be imitated, but he can't transform anyone. There's no great insight in his work that I've seen yet. In fact, he seems to be retelling . . . old stories. I've retold old stories too, but he's created one milieu. I think Bruce Sterling's strength is that he's created many, and can write in any voice brilliantly. And he has the theory that—if he's listened to—can teach us all how to open many worlds, which I think is much more helpful to sf.

HM: I was getting the impression that the genre wasn't important to you, but you're very aware of it.

OSC: Definitely. I've become involved in the community. It's nowhere near the importance of speaking to America at large, or whatever, but that's the family I'm writing to right now, whether I like it or not. That's a lot of my work, and they're the first ones to decide whether it's acceptable or not. Plus, you've got to realize that the sf audience is a special audience. In a way they are. You know, I don't write to them as an elite, but I've got to realize that when I write to them, they will get what I'm doing. It's more likely than anybody else.

HM: It seems to me that you're denying what's so for the sake of a principle you believe in strongly. You're not willing to say they're different or elite.

OSC: I'm not willing to say that they're not qualitatively better. They do have some skills that are not valued in other places. There's a protocol of reading in sf, where you hold things in abeyance, where you're willing to leave everything tentative so that further information can allow you to revise all that went before. That is simply not present in mainstream readers. At the same time, mainstream—literary readers, I should say—are looking for, and are tolerant of, levels of language density that would be absolutely intolerable to me, and to sf readers as a whole. In that sense, that elitism closes doors. I try to write in such a way that there is a superficial story always, that can be received without penetrating any deeper, and enjoyed. At the same time, those that are willing to pass through the different levels of revision will receive, I think, a much richer story. I believe that the meaning of a story resides not in any symbolic structure, but in events themselves.

HM: But you handle your symbolic structure, in *Prentice Alvin* at least . . . smoothly . . . I mean, here he is being annealed by fire, being transformed by fire, as he becomes the Maker, as he baptizes . . .

OSC: This is going to sound really dumb to you, but it wasn't until I had written the first draft of that baptism chapter that I realized what it was. My wife said, "You know, Scott, you have him baptized by water, and later by fire." It didn't occur to me. All I knew is that I needed to have him wash the guy off. I absolutely believe that what you do unconsciously is much more powerful.

HM: [Nonetheless], your literary substructure is there.

OSC: In fact, I think that the real literary substructure is there even if you try not to. Even if you try to lie you'll end up telling the truth: you'll end up revealing the causal universe you think you live in, you believe you live in.

HM: Do you think all fiction is autobiographical?

OSC: Not really so much autobiographical as that it confesses your picture of the world.

HM: That's the truest sort of autobiography.

OSC: I think it goes deeper than autobiography, that is, your own past is your way of acting out your own fantasy about what the world really is—and then your progressive revisions of what it really is.

HM: But that's sort of EST, sort of a yuppie philosophy, because you're assuming one has a choice.

OSC: You realize I'm turning red with anger as you even *think* of comparing it to that. I don't think you have a choice about what it is.

HM: You're implying that people show themselves by how they've lived their past, but there are vast numbers of people in this world that don't have any choice about anything.

OSC: No one ever has no choice about anything. Frankly, even at gunpoint we have a choice whether to live or die.

HM: No, that's a level of—I won't call it sophistry—that's a level of insight into oneself that requires leisure to think about, to achieve.

OSC: You do it anyway. It's not a matter of conscious choice—I'm not referring to contemplative choice, reflective choice—I'm saying

you will always do what is most important to you at any given moment. Regardless of what theory you have, regardless of what you believe is the most important thing.

HM: But that's my point about leisure: If you have to farm sixteen hours a day to survive, you don't think about right and wrong. You're willing to turn that job over to the specialist, the preacher, who *tells* you what's right and wrong.

OSC: That's where I have to disagree with you. When you have nothing but leisure, you are not engaged hour after hour in things that matter, that change people's lives. Then, in fact, who cares what you think. It doesn't make any difference in the world. But when your actual acts, every day, have impact on other people, then the moral values of those acts become central. That's what gossip is all about; that's the most important storytelling we do. Establishing the value of the day-to-day acts. That is all moral reasoning, even if it's not consciously thought

of that way. That's how we define morality to each other, through gossip, and that's a much more important force in our lives than preaching.

HM: A well-taken point and I agree to an extent.

OSC: That's better than I usually get, so I'm grateful.

HM: People are buying your books, so there must be a few that agree with you.

OSC: If I put it as clearly as I'm trying to put it here . . .

HM: You're not supposed to do that.

OSC: That's right. That's what fiction is for: to make you live in my world and follow my rules for a while, without knowing that's what you're doing.

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Transcendental Meditation:

Brain Rose by Nancy Kress

New York: William Morrow & Co., 1990; \$22.95 hc; 324 pages

reviewed by Tony Daniel

Consider the folds and encryptions of a human brain. Pinkish gray, slick with cranial fluids. Take it in your hands and turn it, observe it from all angles. Now apply a bit of force and split it open as you might, say, a head of lettuce or a cantaloupe. Vague structures in among the general sameness. Poetry comes from that? Music? Mathematics? Identity? Impossible.

And yet. And yet it does. They do. Despite all the flights of fancy, all the infinite possibilities of unfettered belief, rationality pulls you downward with a steady, uncaring gravity. Back to the brain. Chemicals. Electricity. Gray matter.

You are a writer. You are Nancy Kress. Part of your task as a writer is to search for transcendence, to give the reader that swift punch right in the soul that lets him know he's alive, that he's human. And yet. And yet there really isn't a soul punch, only neurochemical migrations and the flicker of changing polarity down the pathways of the brain. Will you fake it, throw up a swirl of words like a magician's glitter, and, while we all watch the show, slip gross, oozing reality back inside your velvet cape? Or will you admit defeat, skip the poetry, and show us our very prosaic existence, I'm-terribly-sorry-but-that's-the-way-it-is?

No. You are Nancy Kress and you do things the hard way, the right way. You walk straight up to the bull of a dilemma, grab both horns, and twist that sucker to the ground. You write *Brain Rose*. Just for a moment, a wonderful moment, the bull is down. You have played by the rules of rationality, yet given us the transcendence we desperately long for.

Brain Rose is a startlingly complex performance. As with *An Alien Light*, Kress doesn't do things by halves. She defines her ideas, her characters, her setting from the very beginning. Then, like crystals growing from these seeds of definition, she works out the story intricacies always within the structure inherent in the original seeds. Kress's stories are gems, and *Brain Rose* is a mother of a carbuncle.

There are three faces to the basic crystal, three trains of narrative in the book. Bobentinis one of those jaded, upper classladies, full of grace, and something harder and bleaker, that Kress paints so well. There is also Joe McLaren, rational, obsessively controlled, decent. And there is Robbie Bekke, who is, as Caroline puts it "a bungler, a charming romantic with no ethics, an adventurer who always gets the adventure wrong and never realizes it until it's too late—if then." He also has—or is—the key to the lock on the doorway to God.

Something like God, at least. Kress returns to her familiar stomping ground—rationally justified remembrance of things past. Long past—as in former lives, reincarnated as memories in living people. The idea is that just as memory is somewhat like a hologram, almost infinitely divisible into smaller particles while still retaining the full content, if not the complete clarity, of the whole mind, humanity has evolved a kind of overmind, just like Emerson, Fichte, and other transcendentalists postulated. Each human is a holographic pixel in this overmind, and so the whole of the overmind is reproduced in each individual. And

through a surgical procedure, humans can access at least part of the overmind. They can remember being other people just as well as they can remember being a child themselves.

Caroline, Joe and Robbie undergo the Previous Life Access Surgery (PLAS) for very different reasons. For Joe, it offers a cure for his multiple sclerosis and a chance to keep on doing something worthwhile with his life. Joe is a lawyer working on a commission which is trying to find a cure for a memory plague that has swept the world, leaving thousands repeating a single set of actions—whatever they were caught in when the plague hit—unaware of the passage of time, unable to do or think a single new thing. Caroline's daughter suffers from this plague. She is lost to Caroline, and PLAS is a way for Caroline to handle her grief, to find something in the past that she can connect to, that matters to her as much as her daughter. Forgetting has torn apart Caroline's life, and she wants memories to escape into:

Did it really make so much difference whether that child—
flesh of one's flesh, bone of one's bone—had existed twenty
years ago, or fifty-five? Did it matter whether the intense ma-
ternal love—this is *my child, whom I would fight and die for*—
was forged one lifetime ago, or three? Emotional time was
more flexible than she had ever dreamed (p. 260).

Robbie is more enigmatic. At first, we think he is only getting "plugged" for a lark, for the money this new power might give him. Robbie seems a creature of movement and luck. Slowly we begin to see Robbie is the creation of an order that merely seems like chance at first. Then we come to see that all of the other characters belong to this order also.

You will have guessed that this order is the overmind. This is what Kress means by God in *Brain Rose*. Kress began to explore this idea in what may be her finest short story to date, "Trinity." There, the characters get God's attention as kamikaze moths get ours, by bartering against our window screens. They are supposed to find that God had no idea that we humans existed. The story closes with the chilling suggestion that God, newly aware of us, will want to study us. Perhaps he will want to stickpin us to a display case in heaven's natural history museum. Incidentally, the genius-mad doctor who creates the way to reach God in "Trinity" is named Bobentinis, just like Caroline—perhaps an unconscious, but fitting, choice by Kress.

The God in *Brain Rose* is more humane, since it is the Product of human thinking. Why call it God at all? Doesn't quack like a God? Within the logical confines of Kress's universe, yes. And so, within those confines, we can have our moment of transcendence, our fire in the soul. God is waking up and stretching, and the characters in *Brain Rose* are pulled almost (and in Robbie's case, all the way) to breaking, as if they were skin cells on God's arms, stretched taut in the morning's first yawning. The conflict in *Brain Rose* is both ontological, rooted in the

beginning of all things, and completely human and understandable. Kress sets herself the task of showing her character's actions at all time to be both. By extension, so are all of ours, and we get a kind of rush of eternity—either nausea or exaltation—from the revelation that:

the overall pattern was what counted, the overall history, the racial evolution, not the individual life with its stupidities and failures and tiny, brief pathetic loves and hatreds and carings that seemed so monumental but were utterly unimportant without the constant invention and redemption of memory (299).

And yet. And yet there is Caroline. There is Joe. Perfectly lathed characters. People we know. Caroline with her wit, her grace at all costs. Her horrible fear that grace, manners, might be all there is. That underneath the artifice there is not hard, steady truth, but empty air. Caroline is a Kressian archetype on this sort of person, neither too hard and blind, as is Scena in "Trinity," nor so much the actor that you can't tell when she's trying to grasp at the truth, as is that perfect actress, Barbara Bishop, in Kress's delightful "With the Original Cast."

With Caroline, Kress explores her fascinating, familiar trope, borrowed from Fitzgerald, that the rich are not like you and me. Money, for Kress, is a metaphor for the power of artifice. With money, a person is not fettered to gross nature. Money is a kind of freedom, and with freedom comes grace. Now, whether or not we happen to believe that this character is just as fantastic as a hobbit or an elf, we still want to meet her, to share her company at least in fiction. To think that someone like Caroline, the epitome of the civilized woman, could be encompassed, explained, as a part of a God who inhabits the machine, who is the same

thing as human culture, is somehow a letdown. Caroline is too good for this world, no matter how complex and strange its workings. We'd gladly invite Caroline over for dinner and fine conversation, but we'd have definite second thoughts about having over God-the-overmind.

And Joe is also too good for the world Kress puts him in. He is a reactionary, a tight-assed neo-conservative (at least for 2022), but he is a good man. In fact, he may be the only thoughtful portrait of a caring conservative in literate science fiction—certainly the only one who gets to be the hero of a book. Joe evolves exactly opposite to the overmind. By book's end we see him bending some of his precious principles for the sake of the individuals he cares about. Joe has discovered that people can never meet ideals, and that ideals are tools to bring individuals happiness and fulfillment, not the other way around. The God who is the basis for Joe's identity and existence doesn't give a damn about individuals. If it did, it wouldn't have destroyed Robbie Brekke's mind. Again, we'd have Joe over for dinner, along with Caroline, despite his boorishness, because he is basically a good guy to have around. God-as-overmind, on the other hand, might have us for dinner.

So, though Kress goes for transcendence in *Brain Raw*—something she scrupulously avoided in *An Alien Light*, to the detriment of the book's ending—the transcendence is reducible to, egad, psychology. But Kress's characters are absolutely not reducible to anything other than what they are. Characterization is what Kress does best, and the characters in *Brain Raw* provide the true transcendence that sends shivers through your soul and sets your imagination humming like a struck bell.

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Ivory by Mike Resnick

New York: Tor Books, 1988; \$17.95 hc; 375 pages

Second Contact by Mike Resnick

New York: Tor Books, 1990; \$17.95 hc; 277 pages

reviewed by Joe Milicia

If readers who have always sought out the cutting edge of advanced style and subject—Newer Wave, feminist utopias, cyberpunk or hardest of hard science—may forget that there is still flourishing a kind of sf that could have been written in 1950, save for the omnipresence of computers. A case in point is some fiction of Mike Resnick, whose *Ivory* (1988) and *Second Contact* (1990) hark back to a golden era of no-nonsense style, with copious dialogue featuring arch exchanges among galactic antagonists. Sample from *Ivory*:

"Pillage is a profitable profession," said the Warlord with a smile.

"How very true," replied Bellano, picking up a small Denebian crystal, fashioned in the likeness of a bird of prey. "I don't suppose you'd care to sell anything?"

"Not particularly," answered the Warlord. "I'm a conqueror, not a merchant." He paused. "But if you'd like that little bauble, it's yours."

"Really?"

"In honor of our truce," said the Warlord. "And it will save you the trouble of stealing it," he added wryly (p. 96).

Anyone expecting at least somewhat formulaic writing after noting the opening dedications—one book to "damned good friends," the other to "the best damned guide in East Africa"—will not be disappointed.

Both books are essentially well-crafted detective stories, with much time at the computer in place of old-fashioned legwork. In *Second Contact*, a lawyer seeks to learn why a spaceship captain has killed some of his crew, while the U.S. Government is so hot to have the captain plead guilty by reason of insanity, and why said government is out to assassinate the lawyer himself for doing his job too well. In *Ivory*, a "trophy researcher" wonders where in the galaxy might be found a

fabulous pair of elephant tusks, and why the last of the Maasai tribesmen is so intent on finding them.

Second Contact, the more stripped-down of the two in style and structure, may remind a reader of some low-budget sf film or serial of the '50s where the setting may be the future but everything looks exactly like the present, except for a few key items like ray guns or videophones. The time of *Second Contact* is 2065, but the only differences from 1985 are voice-command computers and some sort of warp drive that has facilitated space travel. People still hang out in "roadside taverns," women switch from "blue jeans and sweatshirts" to high heels and a dress for dinners of lobster bisque and Caesar salad, and curiously (since we don't hear of any wave of social repression) a white man and a black woman can sit together on the streets of New York will "raise eyebrows." Exploratory space vehicles go heavily armed even before the first aliens are discovered, and the human race is known as "Man."

The hero of *Second Contact* is a familiar one in popular fiction, an average American guy with above-average intelligence finding himself in the middle of a military conspiracy, and having to make a very rapid adjustment from pencil-pushing to running for his life and trying to outwit professional assassins. The novel is perhaps most refreshing in its characterization of the hero's sidekick, a black hacker named Jamie Nchohe who does most of his computer investigations for him. She does fall into a stereotype of the tough, spunky, dryly sarcastic black woman, not to mention an older stereotype of the "brilliant woman" who scares off men and so finds solitary work in a "brainy" field. But she's given a strong presence through her snappy dialogue, so it's especially unfortunate that she gets kidnapped late in the story, so that the hero can at least go through the motions of taking charge. Since the novel is very strongly focused on solving mysteries, Jamie remains a loyal sidekick, with only slight hints of some potential sexual complication. (The hero of *Ivory* too has a highly-skilled and nurturing woman friend

who stays on the other side of the border of intimate involvement.)

Ivory has a more complex narrative structure. Though unquestionably a novel, it resembles the pseudo-novels of the "Golden Age" that were essentially short story collections linked by some framing narrative. (Anthology films like *Heavy Metal* and some horror movies provide similar examples.) To be sure, *Ivory's* frame narrative is of central importance, though unfolding in what are labeled "Interludes" between the short stories. The researcher-hero uses a very powerful computer to search 7000 years of galactic history for traces of the Ivory; as the computer digs up segments of the past, we get each segment, out of chronological order, recast in story form.

All the stories are about efforts to gain possession of the fabled Ivory tusks, usually with disaster falling upon the possessor or the seeker; the tusks are about as lucky for their owners as Wagner's Nibelung ring. Surveying these gleanings from history, we get a picture of a classic galactic empire, complete with aggressive colonialism, colorful aliens, an Oligarchy seeking dominance of the Rim and the Inner Frontier, and the like. Most of the stories have some neat twist, ranging from the ingenious to the predictable, with the opening story of a frontier gambling palace among the most intriguing, and "The Potentate" a most heavy case of Arab-bashing.

Kathryn Cramer and David G. Hartwell A Day at the Circus

What keeps science fiction a minor genre, for all the brilliance of its authors and apparent pertinence of its concerns?

—John Updike, *The New Yorker*, Feb. 26, 1990

Spectacle—apocalypse and soaring empires, the unthinkable horrible and the unthinkable wonderful—science fiction deals with large differences in scale. We can see this in the paintings of our best of illustrators. There is a tension between an awe-inspiring landscape in the background and the characters and creatures in the foreground—a tension not found in the historical sources from which our cover illustrators draw their influences. There is as well a tension between realist technique, often, and fantastic subject, a contrast between the observable and the visionary. Often this is jarring. Sometimes it succeeds superbly. But it is illustration, not art (in the way that word is used by art critics).

As with earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes, large contrasts of scale overwhelm our power to make a story or coherent picture out of a jumble of presumed facts and images. Accounts of catastrophic change take a variety of forms, removed by varying degrees from the catastrophic itself: word of mouth (both eyewitness reports and hearsay), newspapers, radio, television, poetry, law . . . The mating of nature and technology may produce astonishing progeny: the sinking of the *Titanic*, the 1929 stock market crash, the explosion of the *Hindenburg*, the Johnstown flood, railroad disasters, plane crashes, the collapse of I-880—and the most wondrous of plots, say, those of A. E. Van Vogt, Philip José Farmer or Philip K. Dick. Today we tend to put greater faith in information conveyed with the flat affect of clinical detachment which, even in its most literal origins—the clinic—has a problematic psychological history. We tend to rely on science to impose some sort of pattern upon the inhuman scale of such events, in a sense to tame them. Flat, journalistic prose helps impose meaning upon chaotic contrasts in scale. It pretends to remove the distraction of individual style. The spectacles of traditional art are coarse, crude, lacking in refinement, style, culture, taste; but also unrestrained and charged with raw power (for example, Frank Herbert's *Dune* or Arthur C. Clarke's *Rendezvous with Rama*).

As John Updike said, "what we tend to remember of science fiction is its amazing, astounding scenery" and that it "wishes to provide escape into plenitude, wherein the dreadful thinness of space is magically enriched." It appears that Updike equates "enrichment" and meaning. His actual stance is unclear. Is he saying that the science or the fiction fills emptiness with meaning? Within the spectacular settings of sf, writers are concerned with the meaning of ideas, with presenting a magical image and then explaining it as scientifically plausible. Ad-

Ivory has a strong conservation message, or, more precisely, it offers nostalgia for the loss of animal life on Earth, and outrage that crass budgetary considerations may imperil efforts to preserve the revered artifacts of human culture. The reader must decide whether or not there is something contradictory about these sentiments in the context of a completely neutral presentation of the hero's profession of verifying records of the hunting of exotic alien creatures like Hornde moos and Devilwols. A reader may also have mixed feelings about the novel's celebration of the physical magnificence and consoling endurance of tribal pride of the Maasai. The perspective, after all, is that of the white male researcher who sympathizes with the "crazy" dedication of the ivory-seeker but still sees him as Other; the effect is still one of distancing.

Fans of hard sf may, in addition, protest a denouement that is strictly mystical or fantastical rather than scientifically accountable. But then, books like *Ivory* and *Second Contact* do not exist to stretch readers' scientific or literary imagination. They do provide swift-moving entertainment, and perhaps, for some, nostalgia for a type of long past and anger over its gender and racial perspectives. ▴

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vanced technology and distant scenes seem magical, wonderful...and the explanation yields additional wonder. But Updike is less concerned with explanations, it appears: "speculative leaps, the spectacle of the never-seen: these are what attract us and dazzle us and in the end weary us of science fiction."

Seldom does our genre get such sympathetic reading from a pillar of the opposition. (And it was sympathetic—a four-page favorable review of *The World Treasury of Science Fiction*, ed. David G. Hartwell.) And indeed Updike is a member of the honorable opposition. He already knows, before sitting down to read, that he will be reading a minor literature. As he remarks, and not without justification—our experts will have to mull this over—spectacle, according to Aristotle, is the last in the list of components of poetic representation: "of all the parts, it is the least artistic, and connected least with the art of poetry." So saith *The New Yorker*.

What are we to make of this as readers of science fiction? Should we be ashamed of a day at the circus, feel common and vulgar in our satisfaction with science fiction that delivers spectacle and wonder? Clearly we do like and respond to the spectacular. Why are we minor?

The fault line which produced the crevasse between science fiction and *The New Yorker* is the H.G. Wells/Henry James split. Wells was a poor kid who struggled upward in society with the aid of a technical school education. James was from a famous and wealthy family with a classical education. Initially friends, both setting out to create art (and praising each other for achieving it), they became adversaries in later life, and their ultimate disagreement was partly aesthetic. The Wellsian aesthetic became the underpinning of science fiction, and the Jamesian aesthetic that of modernist literature. The split is symbolic of the famous "Two Cultures" dichotomy. C. P. Snow, in his influential essay on the subject, traced the separation between literary/humanistic and scientific/technological cultures in our society from its origins in the nineteenth century. It seems clear that the conflict between Wells and James fits Snow's ideas very well, and allows us to contemplate the sociological, as well as aesthetic, origins of science fiction and of modernist aesthetics.

An easy way to understand the difference in their approaches is to compare the frame of James's *The Turn of the Screw* with the frame in Wells's *The Time Machine*, written within a few years of each other, while James and Wells were still friends. The frames have much in common both in setting and in the composition of the groups gathered 'round to hear the strange tale soon to be related. In fact, *The Time Machine* could almost be read as a sequel to *The Turn of the Screw*—upon hearing about the Time Machine, Wells's medical man asks, "Are you perfectly serious? Or is this a trick? Like that ghost you showed us

last Christmas?" (p. 16).

The differences in the frames are quite striking, however. James uses his frame to undermine the reader's confidence in the story about to be told, whereas Wells uses his frame to establish the reader's confidence in the human scale of the tale in juxtaposition to the actual breadth and scope of the events. James does not close his frame—if the group around the fire were to appear at the end, James would have had to give the reader guidance regarding the interpretation of the governess's account; it is rather left as an exercise for the reader. Wells closes his frame at the end of *The Time Machine* and uses it to reassure the reader that he or she is intended to suspend disbelief in the fantastic events. The story related in *The Turn of the Screw* is small scale: subtle interactions between a governess and her charges. The story related in *The Time Machine* is distant in time, extraordinary in point of view and catastrophic: time travel and imaginary war in fantastic landscapes. Both frames are artistically accomplished, but the aesthetics are different.

Henry James scrupulously avoided the vulgar—the coarse, the crude, the unrestrained. Wells did not. But the term vulgarity also pertains to the ordinary, the commonplace, the commonly-occurring or experienced. Thus, in Updike's description of what the literary greats write, we find a real anxiety about the problem of vulgarity. They write

of incidents and details that seem novel. They offer "modest increments of fictional 'news,' of phenomena whose presentation is unprecedented"—a nudging, inching fidelity to human change ultimately far more impressive and momentous than the great glittering leaps of science fiction." Having chosen between the commonplace and the spectacular, writers on the Jamesian side of the crevasse are concerned with successfully struggling with the problem of avoiding commonness and vulgarity. It is almost a case of the forces of entertainment versus the forces of moral instruction. Buried deep within Updike's defense of human ideas is a moral stance that prescribes those modest increments as the highest entertainment of art, above scientific ideas and above the large scale of science fiction. Updike is certainly concerned with avoiding vulgarity.

Traditionally science fiction writers are not because they cannot be.

Historically, in order to be an sf writer one must first have surrendered to the necessity of spectacle in sf. Traditional sf is of the social class that Paul Fussell (in his insightful book, *Class*) called "high prose." It is the literature of people who do things, make things, work in and on the world, people who look down on anyone who cannot fix a machine, do math, build, repair, solve problems. They relate to others in terms of what they can or cannot do, how they manipulate the

Paul Williams from *Rock and Roll: The 100 Best Singles*

Little Richard "Tutti-Frutti"

Consider the scream. In the church—specifically the black Southern Baptist church—it not only signifies but is the experience of surrender to and unity with the Holy Spirit, an ecstatic moment in which the shackles of everyday life are shattered and an individual human voice (heart, soul) achieves and celebrates freedom. The same scream—great God Almighty, brothers and sisters, the same scream—comes forth from lovers' mouths during the ecstasy of sexual union. Sacred moments. The outburst in church, permitted and encouraged and indeed shared by the fellowship, the community, has the effect of making the private public, and also of conferring on the public gathering the power, intimacy, and sanctity of private revelation.

Rock and roll represents a further leap in the socialization of private experience and the simultaneous privatization and revitalization of social experience accomplished by the double-edged sword of the public scream. Little Richard's "Tutti-Frutti," his first hit single, helped tear the roof off the self-satisfied edifice called American popular music, to let in the light of unrestrained sexuality, spirituality, and musicality. Little Richard added the essential element of holy abandon. He taught us—specifically the white kids, the ones who needed to learn—how to scream.

The rest of the story is that "Tutti-Frutti" doesn't just scream; it also rocks. And this aspect of the song—communicated primarily by the band, by musical instruments rather than the human voice—is both stimulating (a real hip-shaker, irresistible) and somehow tremendously reassuring. Where "Rolling Stone" is glorious but ominous, "Tutti-Frutti" is raucous and upbeat; it beckons the listener in, to delight in the singer's hollers rather than be disturbed by them, to relax in the knowledge that this wild ecstasy is safe and friendly, a communion of good times that anyone young and free enough to own a transistor radio (it moves around with you, doesn't sit in the living room) is naturally a part of. Awrootie!

Richard Penniman was nineteen years old and already

three years into a so far unsuccessful r&b recording career when he cut "Tutti-Frutti" at his first recording session for Specialty Records. The session was in New Orleans, Bumps Blackwell was the producer, and "Tutti-Frutti" was an afterthought, an obscure ditty the irrepressible Richard entertained the other musicians with between takes. The track was so hot a local songwriter had to be brought in to clean up the lyrics (originally "tutti-frutti, good booty") and make them suitable for the airwaves.

As often happens, the song that was to introduce Little Richard to the world was recorded by accident. The voice and style were his and his alone, the record captures his essential spirit, but the circumstances by which this true self got onto vinyl was unplanned, a bolt from the blue. "Wop bop a lu wop a lop bomp bomp!" Speaking in tongues. Somehow this bit of lascivious horseplay, intended to amuse the other men in the room, grabbed the attention of the universe instead.

Bob Dylan was fourteen when "Tutti-Frutti" jumped out of his radio: Paul McCartney was thirteen. And nothing was the same after that. What they learned was not just a way of singing, but a new angle of approach, a new possible relationship between me inside here and all of you out there. Rock and roll, born of the direct experience of the divine, became a kind of gospel of direct connection between the awesome force pent up inside the individual creator and the receptive, anonymous hunger of the new technological mass audience.

Little Richard, filled with doubt precisely equal to his amazing assertiveness, suddenly quit rock and roll after eighteen months of stardom and went off to become a preacher. Later, 1964, he returned to claim his crown as King of Rock and Roll, but of course he'd never been gone. Vinyl means immortality. The screams of Little Richard leap joyously off the turntable to this day. ▶

First release: Specialty 561, November 1955

external world using scientific knowledge and technology. High art and low-class trash are equally anathema to them, not useful. SF writers and readers, historically, have often not had the benefit of a classical education, have often not attended much school at all. They value innovation, big ideas, big events, big machines, and spectacle in their stories over individual nuances of execution and character. In other words, style shouldn't get in the way. Ah, yes, often the spectacles of sf are crudely executed, but powerful and impressive nonetheless. Yet sometimes sf stories are art (e.g., Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun* or Gregory Benford's *Timescape*).

But is the contemporary writer a simple vulgarian, a happy, techie proletarian, satisfied with his kind of knowledge and his lot in life, unconcerned with taste and literary respectability? By and large, no. In fact, a certain, well . . . class anxiety has possessed contemporary writers. Many of our best writers are evolving, in part under the class pressure of serious notice from such class critics as John Updike, away from the large scale, the distant, the spectacular. As Gordon Van Gelder notes in his review of *Nebula Award Stories 24* (Issue #20), "cutting edge" sf is increasingly about the past. And our best writers find it increasingly more difficult to write with serious optimism about the future. Somehow it has become much less embarrassing to write about a terrible future that doesn't come true than to write with traditional optimism of a brighter future and be wrong. Especially for our most ambitious talents. And they are anxious about spectacle.

The reason why rejecting awe, wonder, spectacle should have begun to matter so much to so many in science fiction is that sf literature, originally antithetical to the aesthetic of modernist literature, has become in a number of significant cases that remain identifiable as

science fiction (e.g., in the work of J. G. Ballard) indistinguishable from much of the best postmodern fiction (e.g., Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*). And this has introduced an heretofore absent class anxiety into the equation. It has been evident since the sixties. Harlan Ellison is a fantasist. Many great postmodernists are fantasists. Is, therefore, Harlan Ellison a great postmodernist? There is a case to be made in the affirmative. And this case, if accepted generally, is not merely upward mobility. This is a leap across an historic crevasse into the realm of high art.

But is that what Updike is implying for the future of sf? Or indeed for that postmodern literature which is closely linked to sf? We think not. We think he is implying a gradual withering away of this spectacular form in favor of something less distinct but more satisfying on the human scale. And that he would believe that evolution to be a good thing. Because it would fit Aristotle's and his notions of the proper class structure of literature, a structure that he implies is prescriptive for writers and readers.

At a time when historical literary genre distinctions (as well as the distinctions between literature and parallel literature) have blurred, where is the danger to science fiction writers in aspiring to be postmodernists? Perhaps the great strength of science fiction over the decades from Wells to the present has been that it has empowered a class of heretofore silent people, in a sense oppressed by the Jamesian aesthetic, Fussell's "high proles," to relate to each other through ideas and things, through the medium of the sf literature. We wonder if traditional sf writers and readers are not in fact in the middle or later stages of a class war. And are losing. ▶

Prentice Alvin by Orson Scott Card New York: Tor Books, 1989; \$4.95 pb; 342 pages reviewed by Robert Killheffer

The fundamental problems of the human condition are complex and have, thus far, proven insoluble. Many systems exist, religious and otherwise, which propose to solve these ills if everyone else will agree to follow their precepts—of course, that old bugbear *Procrustes* will still walk the earth (in some places, anyway), and disagreements abound. As long as this situation persists in human society (it has since the first semi-scientist australopithecine barked at its neighbor, and it shows no signs of entropy), utopia will remain impossible, and pat moralizing will not contribute to the practical problem of making a decent world of the one we've got. Art and literature will continue to serve their most significant function—challenging perceptions, exciting thought, offering alternative visions and perspectives with no simple answers. These days, the fantasy genre has for the most part become so conventionalized that its elements have largely lost their ability to jar the reader's assumptions or offer different viewpoints—where once a medieval setting and a journey to Faerie alone served to shake things up, they are now expected, and therefore (by themselves) meaningless and in need of challenge in their own right.

As I have lately commented in these pages (see issue #20), there have been a number of recent attempts in the fantasy field to break the genre free of its almost obligatory link with European medieval settings. Barry Hughart's *Bridge of Birds* and *The Story of the Stone* have offered the background of ancient China; Judith Tarr's *A Wind in Cairo* and *Alamut* as well as the two *Arabspace* paranthologies have used historical and fantastic medieval Arabian settings; and Orson Scott Card has revealed a welcome potential a little closer to home in his three volumes of *The Tales of Alvin Maker*. Deeply as I love the flavor of medieval Europe, I sympathize with those who find the endless monotony of uninvited, limp and lifeless medievalist trilogies tiresome, and I approached Card's books from the very first with high hopes.

On first look, they have succeeded. The freshness of the American frontier setting alone won my affection in *Seventh Son*, and the logical and realistic system of folk magic—everyone has a "knack" in this alternate frontier, some strong and others weak, most related to everyday necessities such as weaving, cooking, farming and such—is a relief from

the common unexplained and unearthly fireworks of the good and evil wizards that stalk many genre fantasies. Despite some misgivings, Card's might-have-been America of the early 19th century offered a mixture of alternate history, original setting and careful construction that left me eager for the second and succeeding installments.

Unfortunately, the misgivings I'd had blossomed in the second volume, *Red Prophet*. In its weaker moments, Card's fiction tends toward simplistic moralizing, and while this was submerged beneath a more interesting and complex surface in the first book, it is the whole spirit of the second. Card ventures further into alternate history in *Red Prophet*, providing a vision of the famous Tippecanoe massacre that serves as a critique of American frontier history and politics as a whole. He adopts an all-too-familiar naive primitivism, presenting the Native Americans as pure unsullied souls living in a magical harmony with Nature (and able, for instance, to move through the untouched forest silently at supernatural speeds) battling the intrusion of the Whites, whose civilization destroys the music of the forest "like a disease." This is an entirely unsatisfying return to the myth of the noble savage, the dismaying tendency of modern Americans to idealize the "simple" lives of societies more primitive than our own.

Red Prophet is pervaded by a troubling utopianism largely absent from *Seventh Son*. Through the magic of the Indian Tenskwaw-Tawa, the Red Prophet of the title, Alvin receives a vision of his destiny, a city "shining in sunlight" where "nobody was hungry, and nobody was ignorant, and nobody had to do something just because somebody else made them do it" (p. 165). One of the appealing aspects of the first volume was its concern with the everyday lives of its characters, and the place and role of magic on this mundane level. Alvin was clearly something special, destined for greatness, but this impossible Crystal City is (to a cynical mind such as my own) a disappointing and meaningless goal. *Red Prophet* thus lent a new moralistic and utopian tone to the *Tales of Alvin Maker* that I find distinctly unsatisfying. I finished this second volume far less interested.

So along comes the third book, *Prentice Alvin*. I almost didn't read it—there is always much more I want to read than I can find time for,

and my memories of the last book made me wary. But a couple of my friends, who shared my opinion of *Red Prophet*, recommended it, and I was pleasantly surprised.

One of the strong points of this series is Card's success in making each volume a complete and relatively independent novel. They may contain references to previous installments, but each book maintains an individual focus beside the larger series background, and this storyline is introduced, developed, and resolved between the two covers. Thus, but for the occasional reference to the events of *Red Prophet*, *Premiere Alvin* might almost pick up where *Seventh Son* left off. At the start of the second book, Alvin was off to take up his 'prenticeship with Makepeace Smith of Hatrack River, but was sidetracked by the Choc-Taw wars—in *Premiere Alvin*, he's now back on his way to the smith. This third book centers on the story of Arthur Stuart, orphaned child of a runaway slave who is adopted by the Guester family of Hatrack River, where he attaches himself like a mascot to Alvin. All is not well, though, for there are those in town who resent the presence of a black boy and cooperate with Arthur's former owner in trying to send him back South. Beside this tale—which has the standard beginning, climax, and resolution we expect of a novel—the story of Alvin proceeds, as he grows to manhood, learns the way of Making, and finally meets the "torch girl" (seeress) who had watched over him when he was a child. Card thus provides a successful complete story while moving the series tale along at the same time. What's more, the tone has come down somewhat from *Red Prophet*: the ultimate goal of the Crystal City still figures prominently, but it remains in the background; and Card handles the more visible and central issue of slavery with a lighter and more even hand.

In his "Manifesto of Democratic Art" (*PF&SF*, May 1990), Card declares "It may take a writer with a subtle mind to discover a fresh insight into human life and society. But isn't it then the writer's responsibility to reveal this insight in his fiction as clearly as possible, so that this newly-discovered truth is available to as many readers as possible?" and this philosophy of unambiguous fiction shows clearly through in *Premiere Alvin*, and steals some of its impact. One is never uncertain of the right and wrong of things here—though Card's characters are multi-dimensional and evolve throughout the novel, the sympathies of the reader are never challenged—the lines are drawn, and never questioned. Cevil Planter, the Southern slave owner pursuing Arthur Stuart, is presented as a convincingly evil character, for (as in most real cases of "evil") he believes he is working for right and good,

even though it is clear that underneath he really wishes to do these things anyway. When the Unmaker appears as an angel and commands Cevil to impregnate as many slave women as he can to spread his pure white seed among the Black nation, Cevil agrees both from fear of the Unmaker and because this angel has given him the justification to do what he had already been considering. Nevertheless, no matter how believable a characterization this is, we are not meant nor allowed to feel much sympathy for Cevil; he is not an innocent placed in a difficult moral quandary, whose mistake we might forgive. Card portrays his villain with care, but allows no doubt in the reader's judgement.

This unambiguous presentation of values is not limited to the large issues (such as slavery), but extends to fairly minor topics: when young Peggy the torch has run off to avoid Alvin and grow up on her own, she comes under the tutelage of Mistress Modesty, an accomplished socialite; with her she attends a grand ball, the two of them (in contrast to the rest of the women) dressed relatively simply. "Only Peggy and Mistress Modesty, of all the women here, were not in costume, were not pretending to some unnatural ideal" (p. 92). As it turns out, Peggy's natural charm, her inner beauty, wins all the men's hearts, and she is the envy of the party. Much as we all might like to believe this is true, we know that daily life often runs a different course, justice is not always served, the kind and good do not always triumph, and the simple, unassuming girls do not always get all the men. (Perhaps, you say, they get the worthy ones—those who don't look deeper they wouldn't want anyway—and you might have a point; but Card's world takes it one step further: reality reflects right, and Peggy doesn't have to go home and tell herself that it's all for the best—she gets all the men anyway.) Card's world shows a disappointing tendency to fulfill wishes, to reinforce a pleasant but oversimplified worldview that doesn't stand up to empirical examination.

In the *Tales of Alvin Maker*, Orson Scott Card has offered a refreshing and invigorating alternative setting to the tired cliché of European medievalism; he's written it in a convincing and effective pidgin dialect, and peopled it with interesting and sometimes complex characters (Peggy's father, Horace Guester, is especially well drawn in *Premiere Alvin*). Yet his insistence on unambiguous moralizing has robbed the books of their fullest potential. The most meaningful art will remain that which challenges perception and morality, asks questions but provides no easy answers—art which unsettles, disturbs, and provokes. Too often, Card has given us allegories in the shape of a novel.

***Sous des soleils étrangers* edited by Yves Meynard and Claude J. Pelletier**

Laval: Les Publications Ianus, 1989; \$11.95 Canadian tp; 204 pp.

reviewed by Jean-Louis Trudel

Some of the best-recognized talents of the young sci community in Francophone Canada are assembled in *Sous des soleils étrangers* [Under Alien Skies], a small-press anthology of Québec edited by Yves Meynard and Claude J. Pelletier. Eight short stories and one poem, each prefaced by a short biography and the author's comments, make up the slim volume.

A first glance at the stories may yield the impression of an almost uniform downbeat mood—two of the titles include the verb "to die." Failure may appear to dominate story after story: one heroine fails in her mission and is stranded outside her own reality; one band of characters discovers some disquieting research but is unable to do anything about it; a love affair fails; a lover is lost to a parallel universe; a female lawyer loses a court case; a man comes home to die; and a rebel is crushed into obedience. Even the yawning sea which is the poem's main focus seems to end up as stark sear with chestnuts.

The pervasiveness of the choice of a negative ending may indeed say something about Québec culture, but most stories are really focused on what they are telling and not necessarily on an obligatory happy ending. Still, several do seem to state that failure is a part of life that has to be accepted: in spite of defeat, people survive. Considering the history of Canada, and particularly Québec, that is a not quite unexpected message.

One exception to this pessimism is a detective story by Jean

Pettigrew, "L'Étrange cas de Nef Matusale" ("The Strange Case of the Matusale Ship"), a story that has nothing to do with problem-solving and everything to do with atmosphere. *Ownid* details, weird references, and bizarre puns combine to fashion the amusing tale of how the unvalued inebriated Insh'E Qual solved the death of someone who did not exist. Despite the atomic moralists who can convince matter to do whatever they desire and other baroque touches, this work was inspired by a prosaic Georges Simenon short story. Flamboyant science fiction though it is, it does not leave much of a lasting impression.

Francine Pelletier's "Les Noms de Pouli" ("The Names of Forgetting"), stands on the border between science fiction and fantasy. The hero/heroine slowly comes to grips with his/her mission in a land that is part dream and part nightmare, with imagery and resonances that would make a Freudian's day. Though enjoyable, vagueness about some plot details undercuts dramatic tension and the heroine's sacrifice is unsatisfying: its clever neatness betrays the care taken in the characterizations.

The plot is more rigorous in "L'Évangile des animaux" ("The Gospels of the Animals"), by Jean Dion, but less involving and it is flawed by a lack of adequate scientific validation. There are also too many protagonists: Morgan, a mentally handicapped young man; Fancy, his girlfriend; Beth Collins, a rebel scientist; Lurg, the zoologist; and a cat who escaped the genetic engineering labs of tomorrow's

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United States. There is little suspense, though the discovery of the secret of the gene labs provides a surprising climax, which unfortunately also cuts short the story at the point where it should have begun.

Daniel Serizine's story "Sa Fleur de Lune" ("His Moon Flower") is more tightly focused. Ugné Préquès, a technician of the asteroid-based Eryman civilization, analyzes her failed affair with a psychic Earthman, Nicolas Dérec. The narrative and her bitter-sweet reflections on what might have been alternate effectively. For previous readers of Daniel Serizine, the ending has very little punch. However, the smooth rhythm and varied settings sustain the reader's interest till the final revelation. It forms a sensitive and delicate tale of love unrequited.

Love is also an underpinning of "Mourir, un peu" ("To Die, A Little"), by Elisabeth Vonarburg and Sabine Verreault, two authors that only make one, in fact, since Sabine Verreault is a pseudonym of Elisabeth Vonarburg, who believes she takes a different approach to writing when she uses the second name—Vonarburg has collaborated with her pseudonym. An intriguing point of this short story is an all-male cast, the only women appearing in the story's course being faceless waitresses. If unconscious, it is surprising, coming from a very conscious feminist; if deliberate, it is mystifying, as it seems to bear little relevance to the story—which might be Vonarburg's devious point.

Set in Canada, in a disintegrating world sketched with a few tantalizing hints, the story follows a man who has lost his lover and discovers the city's last refuge of scientists. These scientists know little about the object they are studying, the last gift of Earth's first artificial intelligence. The ending is indeterminate, with the hero about to attempt a passage to another reality. In this case, indeterminacy is not vagueness, it is hope, and the protagonist has progressed. Well thought-out, the story offers the subtlety and fine psychological detail typical of Vonarburg and rewards a second reading.

Joël Champetier's "Karyotype 47, XX, +21" raises the blood's epinephrine level. The patent injustice of a court ignoring the law in allowing an involuntary sterilization will do that. And yet the author has loaded the dice by making the handicapped protagonist unsympathetic. The court is not made to appear totally in the wrong . . .

In a Québec of the near future, carriers of lethal genes are routinely sterilized. Gisèle, a lawyer specializing in such cases, is offered the defence of Sylvie Weintraub, who suffers from Down's syndrome and has been illegally sterilized.

The plot is a classic of misdirection, springing surprises that shouldn't be and providing no easy answers. The characters are stereotyped, but this does not detract from a story that poses a philosophical problem. The social speculation may be timely—but the questions will not go away. The double-whammy at the end may be pessimistic in

tone, but then cautionary tales must be.

Claude Michel Prévost is one of the best stylists of Francophone Canada's science fiction. However, his poem "Sous des soleils étrangers fleurissent des parcomètres" ("Under Alien Suns Bloom Parking Meters") lacks the incendiary verve of his best works; this one merely sparks. Unconventional, fragmented, enriched by intriguing wordplay, it never coheres into something more than the sum of its parts. More surrealism than sci-fi, it is among the weakest pieces in the anthology. A scaly yawning on a rock is the main focus, with the Pole Star ill-advisedly falling into its maw.

Eather Rochon's "Mourir une fois pour toutes" ("To Die Once and For All") presents the seamless simplicity of her previous works. First written in 1976, it later became a prize-winning novel. This is the first publication of the original short story.

François Drexel, who has come back to his home town in order to die, remains marked by his unfulfilled love for a monster that has built a giant seashell around itself, so big that it had become the mansion of the Drexel family. The country is imaginary, the monster is implacable, and the characters are as much symbols as they are people. The oracular quality of the conversations hides more than it reveals and the high points strike unexpectedly. When François Drexel finds the monster's smell in a mound of ashes, he dies. Like that. This outward simplicity of the plot is matched by an uncompromising determination to explore a man's death as deliverance and the romanticism of depression. The prose is deceptively simple, and yet works miracles: Drexel's return to the seashell-mansion after his long absence; the first encounter of Drexel and Xéhin; or the last lines that belong to Xéhin, servant and friend. In Heinlein's short story "Requiem," the hero is also dying when he realizes—of course—his life-long dream. In Rochon's story, François Drexel only hopes for relief; he cannot realize his dream: the monster has died before him. What was the meaning of his life, then? It may lie in his friendship with Xéhin, who was crippled by the monster. It may endure in the people he has known: after all, knowing people may have been the monster's only wish.

The book's last story, "Les Hommes-Écailles" ("The Scale People"), by Yves Meynard, is the only one to be clearly fantasy. It offers a unique world where the human parasites of a great sea beast, Leviathan, travel with it but are condemned to metamorphose into another of its scales when they die.

However, there is a rebel. Joen is afraid of the melding with Leviathan. He finally decides to leave Leviathan for one of the islands of the archipelago through which Leviathan is travelling. Things are not that easy and Joen learns the lesson of obedience to his lord and master. For Leviathan is truly prodigious, more than thirty thousand human

years old and wielding superhuman powers. (This is something of a contrast with the biblical Leviathan, which was none other than the crocodile.)

So, what can a man do against overwhelming force? Is resignation a sign of maturity? What are a man's rights within his social system? Answering is up to the reader. Jörn himself does not quite have the necessary stature. His characterization is insufficient and any deeper motivations remain unclear to the end.

Meymard has however done a superlative job of world-building, creating within the brief confines of the story several races for the endless archipelago, legends, and whole societies, including the parasitic one of the "Scale People." Despite its failings, the story is one of the most original of the anthology.

This slim book, with a cover by Jean-Pierre Normand, bears witness to the distinctiveness of Francophone sf in Canada. Its voices are different mostly in what they are not, speaking with a cool passion of the interpenetration of realities, the mixing of cultures, or the quiet desperation that is born of failure. In spite of the title, most stories do not take place under faraway stars; the Sun shines rather on future possibilities or strange realities. Sometimes, the stories wink at the reader, "Are you taking this seriously?", as they play with tired motifs of science fiction or fantasy. Sometimes, they inspire growth or disagreement, and sometimes a simple wistfulness. None of the stories assembled here leaves one indifferent or is merely derivative, and, together, they make up one of the best Québec anthologies of 1989.

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Up and Coming

Continued from page 24

And as for neglected high spots, Nancy Krecas' first novel, *The Prince of Morning Bells* heads the list. That passionate, imaginative, feminist fantasy is worthy to sit beside Peter S. Beagle on the shelf. Paul Hazel's *Yearwood* is the high-water mark of contemporary Celtic myth retold. Robert Stallman's *The Orphan* is the work of an original talent of power and range, not bound by category but definitely fantastic. R. A. MacAvoy's *Ten With the Black Dragon* charms, entertains, delights, and is unique. Walter S. Wangerin's *The Book of the Dun Cow* is the only contemporary example of the medieval beast epic. It was published as a children's book. Then as a fantasy. There is no category today for beast epic. It is almost entirely successful on its own terms. You can't say that about many books.

Then there are developing talents such as Michaela Roessner, whose *Walkabout Woman* promises an impressive future body of work, and Judith Tarr, learned and witty, who keeps getting better and better, and Barbara Hambly, ditto.

Well, what does this all mean for the contemporary fantasy field? For one thing, it means that there are a fair number of good books and good writers out there beyond the bestsellers and well-known talents. Quite probably with careful research I could come up with more names and more titles. Fantasy literature is not in bad shape, from these examples. Are they a minority of the bulk of the current literature? They are. It's up to you to seek them out and read them and support them, or not. My job is to recommend them, and I do.

—David G. Hartwell

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Up and Coming

Recently, I accepted an assignment to write an article for the *New York Times Book Review* on the development of the fantasy category by the publishing industry over recent decades. As a graceful note in conclusion, I ended with a select list of neglected or unknown (to the *New York Times* readership) writers and works. My editors at the *Times* wanted me to deal with high-spot names from the past in the general body of the article and, at the end, to focus on high quality and not on contemporary bestsellers. Since the moment of publication in April, I have gotten a fair amount of grief from various quarters about that final list, all in the form of "you left off. . . ."

Of course I did not attempt to be complete or comprehensive. . . . I was even a bit loose with the instructions, including, say, Scott Card (who cannot conceivably be considered neglected, but might well be unknown to many *Times* readers—at least he's not a best seller in fantasy, but you get my drift). I worked under extreme deadline pressure (I had court hearings in late March and was unusually busy, too) but I took the trouble to go over my list with Donald G. Keller, who knows a good bit about fantasy. Do you perceive a note of defensiveness in my tone? You should. Because I have been thinking of writers and books I could have added ever since. And so in justice to them, I have taken the trouble to note down an additional list to present here. No writer on this list would have been entirely out of place, although given my experience with *Times* editing, several of them would have been seriously challenged and perhaps deleted, because they were not published as category books.

Perhaps my most obvious omissions were Peter Ackroyd's dark and intensely challenging *Hawkmoor*; John M. Ford's gorgeous historical fantasy, *The Dragon Waiting*; Gillian Bradshaw's Gwalchmai books (*Hawk of Mayet* seq.), the best Arthurian sequence of recent decades; Patrick Süskind's E.T.A. Hoffmannesque bestseller, *Perfume*; Barry Hughart's award-winning oriental fantasy, *Bridge of Birds*; Alasdair Gray's impressive epic fantasy, *Lanark*; Pat Murphy's extraordinary Mayan novel, *The Falling Woman*; Emma Bull's hip contemporary mix, *The War for the Oaks*; or indeed Geoff Ryman's altogether extraordinary novella, *The Unconquered Country*.

James P. Blaylock should have been on the list, at least for his Bradburyesque *Land of Dreams* and his LaFonteynesque *The Last Coin*. He's already begun one of the most interesting careers in contemporary fantasy literature and keeps getting better. Patricia Geary's *Strange Toys*, Nancy Willard's *Things Invisible to See*, and Connie Willis's *Lincoln's Dreams* could have been included. I am undecided as to whether each should have, but not in doubt as to the high quality of the works. None of them are category fantasy. Tim Powers is no more neglected than Scott Card, but if I included Card, I should have included Powers. I like *The Drawing of the Dark* a lot, but *The Anubis Gates* should have put him on the list just by itself. Or *On Stranger Tides*. What an extraordinary, maverick, unclassifiable talent Powers has! And Greg Bear's two fantasies, *The Infinity Concerto* and *The Serpent Mage*, qualify him.

(Continued on page 23)

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